

"We are realists... we dream the impossible" - Che

Fire This Time!

CUBANS VOTE YES!



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4 YEARS OF WAR ON YEMEN



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EYEWITNESS REVOLUTIONARY VENEZUELA



Special Venezuela Section
Pages 8-15 & 21-23



HUGE DEFEAT FOR THE U.S. IN VENEZUELA

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NATIONAL ENERGY BOARD GIVES GREEN LIGHT TO CLIMATE DESTRUCTION

By Thomas Davies

No one, especially the National Energy Board, expected the National Energy Board (NEB) to do anything but recommend approval of the Trans Mountain Pipeline Expansion. Its plan to once again go through the motions before a rubber stamp approval of the project was clear from the get go – especially since the only effort the NEB made in this new assessment of the marine impacts of the pipeline project was in its attempt to limit its scope constantly.

The NEB was forced to go back to the drawing board after a Federal Court of Appeals decision “quashing” the government’s approval of the Trans Mountain Pipeline Expansion. The court found the NEB’s initial report “flawed” in that it ignored the obvious marine impact of a seven times increase of oil tanker traffic, as well as a glaring lack of consultation with Indigenous nations.

It was Prime Minister Justin Trudeau who arbitrarily required the NEB finish its new assessment in 22 weeks, but it was the NEB who then went to work making sure they had as little real work to do as possible. They limited the review of marine impacts to only 22 kilometres off the coast, rather than the 370 km requested by scientists. They also refused to consider the obvious climate change impacts of the increase in Tar Sands oil production and usage, and they made their review process a confusing mess that arbitrarily allowed oral testimony from Indigenous nations while demanding others fax in submissions before hastily declared deadlines.

Worst Kept Secret

So when the February 22 deadline for the NEB to submit its report came around, no one was surprised that they once again recommended approval. What was somewhat surprising was their own admission that marine shipping related to the oil pipeline is likely to cause “significant adverse environmental effects” on the endangered Southern resident killer whale and Indigenous cultural use associated with the whale, and also that greenhouse gas emissions from marine vessels would “likely be significant.”

Despite these admissions, the NEB declared that the pipeline was still in the non-defined “national interest” and issued 16 new non-binding recommendations which all begin with vague non-directions like: “Consider,” “Look at,” “Continue engagement” and “Seek feedback”. Useless!

In a joint news conference of Indigenous and environmental leaders, Grand Chief Stewart Phillip described the NEB recommendation as “a complete dog’s breakfast,” and emphasized that the Indigenous-led opposition which has so far stopped the pipeline would continue, “The gauntlet has been thrown down.”

In an article in The Tyee magazine, journalist Andrew Nikiforuk quoted economist Robyn Allen, “The disconnect is huge. The board has now underestimated marine risks just to approve a project whose economic benefits don’t exist. And they approved a \$5-billion project based on the 2015 calculations when in fact the project will likely cost closer to \$10 billion. They deny the facts, the truth and the science.”

Which Side Are They On?

The NEB has been an open scandal for decades – a board of appointed mostly semi-retired energy industry executives and consultants who are somehow supposed to be impartial judges of energy project approvals is a pure dark comedy. Take a look at the three-person board for this past report; all were appointed by previous Prime Minister Stephen Harper. Alison Scott oversaw the initial flawed review of the pipeline. Lyne Mercier was forced to recuse herself from the 2016 review of the Energy East pipeline project after revelations that she was meeting privately with an industry representative. Murray Lyttle’s NEB bio says he has “held a series of senior positions in the oil, gas and mining industries.”

The alarmingly cozy relationship between the government of Canada and corporations is also on full display as details emerge about the Prime Minister’s attempt to pressure now former Attorney General Jody Wilson-Raybould into taking it easy on scandal ridden engineering and construction giant SNC Lavalin.

The plot thickens with every news cycle, but it’s clear she was repeatedly pressured to give SNC Lavalin “deferred prosecution agreements” instead of continuing with full Federal charges against the corporation for bribing Libyan government officials with \$48 million while defrauding Libyan organizations of another \$130 million.

The harmless sounding “delayed prosecution agreements” are actually literal “get out of jail free” cards for corporations caught breaking laws. All the corporation has to do is admit to wrongdoing and commit to changing its behaviour. The justification given is usually that there are a lot of jobs at stake if the corporation is made to pay for its crimes. For his part, Trudeau also reminded Wilson-Raybould that SNC Lavalin is based in Quebec and



that he will be up for re-election in that province.

These agreements are unfair and sketchy, to begin with, but SNC Lavalin has shown itself time and time again to be rotten to the core. It's already banned from World Bank projects for ten years due to corruption, and the short list of its other crimes includes admitting to huge illegal payments to political parties in Quebec and millions more in kickbacks to win a construction contract for a \$1.3 billion hospital in Montreal.

Each time a scandal is uncovered, the CEO is changed, and the company promises "things will be different this time." They've been asking for the same treatment this time, and Prime Minister Trudeau has been doing everything he can to give it to them.

The Trans Mountain Connection

Generally speaking, the connection between the SNC Lavalin and Trans Mountain scandals come down to the government of Canada giving special treatment to corporations at the public expense, but the specific connection goes even deeper.

Trudeau also chose retired Supreme Court Judge Frank Iacobucci to lead the supposedly new and improved consultation process with Indigenous nations. However, Mr. Iacobucci is also currently a lawyer representing SNC-Lavalin in its ongoing attempt to secure a plea deal and avoid a criminal conviction on the Libya corruption charges. So Mr. Iacobucci isn't exactly an aloof and impartial individual without connections to corrupt, corporate Canada. SNC Lavalin would also very likely be in the running to secure many construction contracts should the project go forward.

The Union of BC Indian Chiefs' Jody Wilson sent a letter to Iacobucci before a December 10, 2018 roundtable on consultations he hosted at Thompson River University in Kamloops, pointing out that he was selectively choosing which bands and chiefs to meet with.

Three members of the Secwepemc Nation, whose territory the pipeline would cross for hundreds of kilometres, were barred from attending that closed-door event. When they protested outside, they were arrested and charged with mischief. "What kind of consultation is this, if people are getting barred from going in and trying to hear what was being said?"

Charlene Aleck, an elected councillor from the Tsleil-Waututh Nation agreed, "I don't see anything different [in] the way that they're operating and running their round of consultations and ideas for

the communities or First Nations," she said in an interview with National Observer.

Meanwhile, Natural Resource Minister Amarjeet Sohi, who is charged with overseeing the consultations, is already saying that the government is in a "very strong position" to finish consulting Indigenous nations within 90 days of the NEB report.

Ultimately it's clear these consultations are just another public relations manoeuvre, especially when PM Trudeau himself has already stated publicly "that the federal government stands by the TMX expansion project and will ensure it moves forward in the right way."

The Crisis

Why does one more pipeline matter so much? Because we've very clearly reached a point where committing to decades more of extracting and burning some of the dirtiest energy possible is incompatible with the unfolding climate crisis.

Even investment bank Morgan Stanley admits that climate-related disasters have cost the world \$650 billion over the last three years. They also see this damage increasing exponentially - acknowledging that damages associated with global warming could total \$54 trillion by 2040, according to a United Nations panel composed of the world's top climate scientists. These costs will be from four main areas: sea-level rise, weather events, changes in agriculture and infectious disease.

That same United Nations panel found that we have 12 years to drastically reduce the world's CO2 emissions or face catastrophic and likely irreversible changes to the planet on which we depend.

Antagonists and Protagonists

That's what makes PM Trudeau, the NEB and the oil corporations attempt to push through this pipeline so criminal.



Above:
Aftermath of earthquake and tsunami in Japan. March 12, 2011. "...damages associated with global warming could total \$54 trillion by 2040, according to a United Nations panel composed of the world's top climate scientists."



Right:
Three members of the Secwepemc Nation were arrested when they protested outside a closed door "Indigenous Consultation" by Trudeau-appointee Frank Iacobucci.

They're trying to loot everything they can from a building they know is burning while leaving everyone else trapped inside.

Many of us were on the streets of Vancouver on February 22, 2019 protesting what we had known was going to be an inevitably heinous decision. Lacking was the sense of letdown that has accompanied previous NEB and government decisions in favour of the pipeline - despite the clear environmental, Indigenous rights and economic arguments against it. With every scandal, more and more people are coming to understand that the government of Canada always sides with corporate profits before the interests of Indigenous people, poor and working people and the planet. They also realize the best way to stop the pipeline and build a better world is to build a movement that represents our interests. The added urgency of the climate crisis is making this both more critical and more achievable.

System Change Not Climate Change!
Build Our Future, Not a Pipeline!
United for People & Planet!

Follow Thomas on Twitter: @thomasdavies59

CHIEF BOB CHAMBERLIN

VICE PRESIDENT OF THE UNION OF BC INDIAN CHIEFS

EXCERPTS OF SPEECH TO FEBRUARY 22ND "UNITED FOR PEOPLE & PLANET!" MARCH & RALLY.



I want first to acknowledge that we are on the territories of the Tsleil-Waututh (səlilwətaʔ), the Squamish (Skwxwú7mesh) and the Musqueam (xʷməθkʷəy̓əm) First Nations, unceded territories.

One of the things I've noticed about the Federal politicians lately is they really like to acknowledge that they are on unceded territories wherever they happen to be. It takes more than words to recognize, truly recognize, the place that First Nations people have. It takes more than just saying 'I know where I'm standing.' It's about respecting the authority of the Aboriginal title, rights and the inherent jurisdiction.

Now we need to be able to have a country where we can rely upon politics being separate from justice. And we're not seeing that. And I know what we're here today for. I know many of you remember it was just a couple of short years ago when he was telling his cabinet and his MP's that "we will support this pipeline" before the recommendations were tabled. And this is continued today.

He has stated time and time again that this pipeline will be built. Do you believe that? I didn't think so and I don't believe it either. We have a government

that has made some very serious commitments to every one of you as Canadian citizens, and myself as well, as a First Nations person. And that's the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People. This is a very critical international document describing the minimum set of standards for human rights.

Who believes in human rights in Canada? Well, I can tell you

after 150 to 200 years, the Canadian government has built this country on the denial of Aboriginal people's human rights.

They have systematically developed the governance structure and processes which are dealing with our human rights as an inconvenience to their friends who happen to own corporations such as big oil and gas.

When this government stands up and commits to each and every one of us as Canadian voters that they're going to implement the U.N. Declaration of Rights Indigenous People this means consent of First Nations in their traditional territories, nothing short of that.

And so now the Court, they're walking around again. The governments are. They have hired, I believe it's an ex-judge to go out and do more "consultation" with First Nations on this. Well, we have to understand what consultation actually is. Consultation is defined by the government, designed by the government, implemented by the government. They prioritize what's important, and they make the decision.

Nowhere in there is a First Nation ever

going to experience free, prior and informed consent. It's a rigged deck from the start, and it's a rigged deck ever since he was speaking that this pipeline will be built regardless.

This is a very clear example, and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs is always focused and mindful of when the government forgets the laws of this land and reminds them that these are mechanisms of justice for this country. That consultation is not enough. Consultation is a way that First Nations participate and actually help the Crown develop the argument to run over the top of our human rights. And that is unacceptable.

I want to believe, and I do truly believe, that the good citizens of Canada stand with First Nations and say, 'it doesn't matter what race of people you are, it does not matter what your faith is, the fact is you're a human being, you're living in Canada. This is a society built upon laws and justice, and we are watching again and again and again, generation after generation, government after government, targeting Aboriginal people's human rights.'

I find that to be deeply offensive and deeply way-offside in terms of who Canada is in this country or in this world. It brings me great joy to my heart to stand with all of you, because when I see us coming together over something that is so critical to our existence on this planet - the planet.

And industry they don't like to talk about that, they like "mitigation strategies." They like to rename things like "overburden" when we are actually talking about the land. But what we all realize is if we all take a deep breath right now, we need that air. I'm drinking a tea right now. I needed water for this, and I need that to live every day.

Having a planet that can sustain us is critical and important. And we're not going to lose this. There's no way we're going to lose this thing. We're standing by we're standing strong. And we are here to make sure that the governments understand the power of the people whose feet are on the street today, tonight and tomorrow.

UNITED FOR PEOPLE & PLANET!

LARGE VANCOUVER MOBILIZATION REJECTS NEB'S "RUBBER STAMP" PIPELINE SUPPORT

By Thomas Davies



Indigenous drummers lead the march.



The march took up several blocks of downtown Vancouver.



Rally co-MCs Climate Convergence organizers Brenna Rosen and Alison Bodine.

People wore 13 signs summarizing the key findings of the recent UN climate report.



It did not take a mastermind to know that the National Energy Board (NEB) was going to recommend approval of the Trans Mountain Pipeline Expansion, again. With that in mind, the Climate Convergence coalition organized an education and action campaign before the February 22nd announcement deadline, as well as a major mobilization in front of the NEB's downtown Vancouver offices for that day.

When the inevitable announcement hit, people were ready. Despite a snowstorm in the afternoon, over 700 people still showed up in front of the NEB office to make sure that opposition to the Trans Mountain Pipeline Expansion was front and centre, on the streets and in the news. It was also an important opportunity for people to come together for a beautiful and dynamic action to get motivated for the work yet to come.

The rally was loud, spirited and colourful. A group from Victoria brought several massive inflatable orcas, organizers from Seattle, U.S., brought their beautiful artwork and banners, and many others brought handmade signs. Climate Convergence also had their growing supply of banners, as well as a newly made one declaring, "United for People and Planet." There were also 13 large picket signs summarizing the key findings of the recent UN climate report which people wore while forming a human chain near the front of the rally. The climate report was explained in a leaflet which was handed to people observing the march and rally.

Indigenous drummers from many Nations led the way with their songs, while behind them chanting continued from the front all the way to the back of the march.

The rally was a solid demonstration of the strength and diversity of the Indigenous-led climate justice movement. Chief Bob Chamberlin, Vice President of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs opened (read his remarks on page 4) and was followed by Will George a Tsleil-Waututh Nation member and spokesperson for Protect the Inlet. Next was Cedar George, a member of the Tsleil-Waututh Nation. Helen Tommy of the Wet'suwet'en Nation shared the struggle of young Indigenous people fighting the Coastal Gaslink Pipeline in Northern British Columbia, while Morgan Michel from 350 Seattle brought greetings and update from organizing against the pipeline expansion from Washington State. High school student Maya Mersereau-Liem of Sustainability Teens Vancouver spoke of the ongoing student strikes which she is part of organizing in Vancouver, and the Solidarity Notes choir distributed song sheets and got the crowd to sing climate justice songs together.

As the sun set, rally MCs and Climate Convergence organizers Alison Bodine and Brenna Rosen invited everyone to get involved in the ongoing climate justice organizing which has stalled the pipeline expansion effectively so far. Over the past ten years of struggle, it has been determined and committed people coming together which has so far been vital to continue our struggle.

No Trans Mountain Pipeline Expansion – Not Now, Not Ever!

United for People and Planet!

Build Our Future, Not a Pipeline!

OKINAWA & SHANNON



Two Spotlights of Resistance to U.S./NATO Military Bases

By Janine Solanki

We are living in a world on fire. In every region of the world, there is a country facing U.S.-backed war, occupation, military aggression or sanctions.

The Middle East and Africa have been the main focus of this war drive. Afghanistan's 17 years of war and occupation began in 2001, and the invasion of Iraq in 2003 extended to an ongoing war and occupation continuing today. The brutal NATO bombing of Libya in 2011 has left the country which formerly had the highest living standard in Africa in complete chaos. Today Syria is devastated by the U.S. first arming and training mercenaries to wreak havoc in the country, and now U.S. and Israeli airstrikes and military action. Then there is, of course, Palestine, which has been under Zionist Israeli occupation since 1948 with U.S., Canada and EU support.



Protest in Kabul, Afghanistan marking the 16th anniversary of the US-led invasion. October 6, 2017

From the Middle East to Africa, Europe to Asia to Latin America, we are living in a new era of war and occupation. This immense and far-reaching imperialist military machine needs infrastructure to work, which would not be possible without a global network of foreign military bases. According to the U.S. Department of Defense website, the U.S. military operates in more than 160 countries, on all seven continents, with approximately 4,800 defense sites. An estimated 800 to 1000 of these bases are foreign bases, with approximately 450,000 soldiers stationed overseas according to Business Insider. These bases are not only springboards from which to carry out military actions. U.S. foreign military bases are also denying the self-determination of many oppressed nations, whose people have protested against these bases and have often been displaced and threatened by the presence of the U.S. military on their lands. As countries struggle to assert

their own independent foreign policies, they face the global bully of the U.S. having the last word and dictating their decisions in favour of U.S. imperialist interests. No wonder the executive military power of all imperialists is the United States, who has elevated itself to an international brutal war machine.

Among 1000 U.S. foreign military bases, in two corners of the world, two examples shine out for their consistent and ongoing resistance to the U.S. military presence in their lands. These are in Okinawa, an island under Japanese rule, and Shannon Airport in Ireland.

Okinawa: The U.S. Overstayed a Welcome They Never Had

In Okinawa, the occupation started in 1945, when it was the site of one of the bloodiest battles of World War II. On April 1, 1945, the U.S. Navy's Fifth Fleet and more than 180,000 U.S. Army and Marine Corps troops descended on Okinawa. When the battle was over, 110,000 Japanese soldiers lost their lives, and it's estimated between 40,000 and 150,000 Okinawan citizens were also killed – one third of the pre-war population.

Seventy-four years later, the U.S. military still hasn't left Okinawa. Okinawa remained under U.S. occupation and control after World War II, until 1972! Today there are 50,000 U.S. soldiers in Japan, and Okinawa is burdened with 73.9% percent of the total number of the U.S. bases in Japan. The length and width of Okinawa are inundated with U.S. bases (more than 30!) for their air force, marine corps, army and navy, and even waters designated for military training. Successive U.S. administrations have continued keeping the bases at Okinawa, and it is no different with U.S. President Trump. At their first White House meeting after Trump's election, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzō Abe and U.S. President Trump agreed on the need for the "long-term, the sustainable presence of U.S. forces" in Japan.

For the local Okinawan population, first and foremost their self-determination and rights over their lands are violated by the constant, ongoing presence and occupation of the U.S. military. Then there is the effect of the U.S. military on their safety and well-being.

According to a June 2017 Okinawa prefectural government report, since 1972 nearly 6,000 crimes committed by U.S. military personnel and civilian employees have been reported in Okinawa. About 10% of these cases were serious crimes such as murder, robbery or rape. According to 2017 data published by the Japanese Committee for Peace, only 16.9% of breaches of the criminal code committed by American military personnel the previous year were brought to court.

The U.S. government doesn't spend \$100 billion a year operating foreign military bases without reason. As said at the beginning of this article, foreign military bases are part of the current U.S. imperialist war drive. Okinawa is in the South China Sea, a region of vital importance for future U.S. containment of growing military power of China and as well as maneuvering and military aggression against China and Russia. U.S. bases in Okinawa are also part of the U.S. strategy against North Korea, as well as to assert U.S. dominance in the whole Asia Pacific region.

For over 70 years the Okinawan people have opposed and protested the U.S. military presence on their land, with protests, legal challenges, and elected Okinawan officials, especially their governors, exerting the limited powers they have against the U.S. military occupation. The protest movement is alive and well today – on August 11, 2018, over 70,000 protesters rallied, despite pouring rain and an approaching typhoon, in protest to the construction of the new base in Henoko.

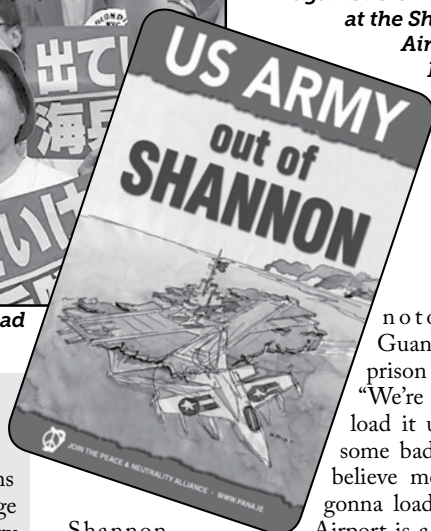
On February 24, 2019, a referendum was held in Okinawa Prefecture which asked voters to approve or oppose the landfill work at Henoko for the construction of the new base. Leading up the referendum, in January 2019 Jinshiro Motoyama, a 27-year-old activist, held a five-day hunger strike calling for the participation of all Okinawan municipalities in the referendum. The referendum results were 72% of votes against the construction of the new base.

Protests are held every day to peacefully block the gates and prevent construction equipment from entering Camp Schwab at the new Henoko base. Alongside the protests on the streets, protesters also take to the seas. Henoko Blue, a civilian canoe team, conducts



Protest in Okinawa, Japan. The signs read "Get out US Marines." June 19, 2016

**Campaign poster
against U.S. military
at the Shannon
Airport in
Ireland**



notorious
Guantanamo
prison that,
"We're gonna
load it up with
some bad dudes,
believe me, we're
gonna load it up."

Airport is a pitstop

on the way to take U.S. captured
detainees to prisons like in Guantanamo, to be
tortured and held without trial or due process.

Most of what has been documented about the
use of Shannon Airport by the U.S. military
is thanks to the monitoring and reporting
by Shannonwatch (www.shannonwatch.org),
a group of peace and human rights activists
against U.S. military use of Shannon Airport.
They also organize a monthly peace vigil
outside the Shannon Airport.

Protests at Shannon Airport began soon
after the U.S. military started landing there.
On September 1, 2002, World Peace Day,
the first Women's Peace Camp was held at
Shannon Airport. They held a 12 hour vigil
and rally to protest that the Irish government
refused a national referendum on allowing
the U.S. to use Shannon Airport for military
purposes. Subsequent polls indicate how a
referendum would have ended up. In 2007,
a poll commissioned by Peace & Neutrality
Alliance (PANA) in Ireland and conducted by
Lansdowne Market Research Ltd, found that
58% were opposed and only 19% in favour of
the use of Shannon Airport by U.S. troops. A
2013 poll also commissioned by PANA found
that over three-quarters
of Irish people believed
Ireland should have a
policy of neutrality, and
8 out of 10 that did not
want Ireland to support
the military intervention
in Syria that was then
being considered by the
U.S. and UK.

Acts of civil disobedience
have also taken place.
In September 2002 an
activist painted 'No way'
on a warplane in the
airport. In January 2003
another activist dis-
armed a C-40 transport

military plane with an axe. After it was
repaired, other activists dis-armed it again.
In recent years, activists have entered the
Shannon Airport runway and been found
guilty of having "interfered with the
proper use" of Shannon Airport. In July
2014 two Irish legislators crossed a fence
and proceeded towards two U.S. military
aircraft with the intention of inspecting
them, as Irish authorities have refused
to do. As a result, they spent a short time
imprisoned after they refused to pay fines
against them. These are just some cases
of resistance against the U.S. military at
Shannon Airport.

The U.S. military use of Shannon Airport
has gained international attention and
helped to raise the issue of NATO and
U.S. foreign military bases worldwide.
On November 16-18, 2018, the First
International Conference against U.S./
NATO Military Bases was held in Dublin,
Ireland. The conference was attended by
close to 300 participants from over thirty-
five countries from around the world. The
conference culminated in a protest with
international attendees at the Shannon
Airport.

Both Okinawa and Shannon are striking
examples to the world of how to resist
U.S. military presence and occupation
with consistent action. While these two
examples are noteworthy spotlights, many
other organizations are protesting NATO
and U.S. foreign military bases around the
world. As the U.S., and NATO are waging
their new era of war and occupation at the
expense of oppressed nations, it is of vital
importance to bring these organizations
together to build a strong and united
movement against these foreign military
bases. From Okinawa to Shannon, to those
1000 foreign bases around the world, let's
bring an end to the U.S. and NATO use
of our world as a battleground, and fight
against war and for a world of peace!

Follow Janine on Twitter: @janinesolanki

**NATIONAL MOBILIZATION
to Oppose NATO,
War and Racism**

**March and Rally • Saturday, March 30, 2019
1 pm • Lafayette Park, Washington, DC**

By Azza Rojbi & Mike Larson

At a time when Venezuela is under increasing pressure and imperialist aggression, two young organizers from the Fire This Time Movement for Social Justice, Azza Rojbi and Michael Larson, were invited to participate as the Canadian delegation within the International Peoples Assembly in Solidarity with the Bolivarian Revolution and against Imperialism held in Caracas, Venezuela.

As part of the Assembly activities, we had the opportunity to participate in the Che Guevara Internationalist Youth Brigade. We saw first-hand how young people are actively building the Bolivarian revolution

is education. One of these youth leaders was Diego Jesus Gonzalo, the National Coordinator of the Bolivarian Student Organization, which was created by the late president Chavez in 2005 to give students a sense of pride in their education. Not just at the high school level but throughout all levels of education in Venezuela you'll see young people actively organizing and influencing educational policies and their curriculum.

Another movement at the forefront of the revolution is MEVEN (Ecology Movement of Venezuela). MEVEN was formed to teach youth the importance of understanding how the environment impacts us each day, why they need to raise

People in Venezuela Are Mobilizing in Defense of Their Sovereignty & Self-Determination!

Eye-Witness Report from the Internationalist Che Guevara Youth Brigade & the International People's Assembly in Venezuela. Feb 14-27, 2019.

and maintaining the gains they fought for despite having to face brutal economic sanctions and an aggressive media campaign claiming there's a so-called "humanitarian crisis" in Venezuela. The brigade was comprised of 150 youths from over 40 different countries from various political parties and social movements. The main goal of this brigade was to unite young people in defence of the Bolivarian revolution, to see the reality of Venezuela through the eyes of Venezuelans, and to use this experience to combat the lies and manipulation spread by the imperialist media.

Youth Are the Foundation of Revolutionary Progress

The mainstream media conveniently leaves out the role Venezuelan youth have played as a major force within the Bolivarian revolution. We saw first-hand at the UBV (Bolivarian University of Venezuela) how youth in Venezuela are taking the lead in defining and expanding one of the main achievements of the revolution, which

productivity by growing more food and medicines for the communities, and the importance of combating climate change. When the brigade split into various groups to visit different parts of the country, the youth leaders of MEVEN had organized a program for us to see the importance of community and food sovereignty in Venezuela.

We saw in action the revolutionary commitment and work of these Venezuelan youth when we visited the agroecological school in Caricuao. The school is an initiative by the "Francisco de Miranda" Front (FFM), MEVEN and the Urban Agriculture Movement "Siembra Venezuela." Led by the community, the government expropriated an idle plot of land being used as a garbage dump that belonged to a multinational corporation. The community now is transforming the space into a training and research centre to teach and promote the production of food and natural medicine using sustainable practices and organic farming methods. We experienced first-hand working alongside



some of the community members at the school the immense spirit of dedication, dignity and pride they have in their Revolution. It was a concrete example of how the Venezuelan people are organizing themselves and fighting back against the economic war and sanctions.

We Are Venezuela

To better understand how Venezuelans are further fighting against this unjust war and aggression on their country, our Caricuao brigade team participated in the activities of Somos Venezuela (We are Venezuela). This grassroots movement is another community organization that has its finger on the pulse of the community; members of this movement will go door to door, house to house and check in with people living in their community to see how they are doing and if they require any basic goods. Then they work with the revolutionary Venezuelan government to provide it to them.

When we first arrived, we received a very warm welcome by the residents with beautiful songs performed by children from the community, before embarking with medical and household goods to deliver house by house. One woman upon seeing us arriving up the hill approached us enthusiastically. She didn't just want us to drop off the mattress we were bringing but, also to see her home where she lives with six family members, two of them children with special needs. She shared with us how much gratitude she has for the Bolivarian Revolution that gave her and her family a dignified life. As we continued going home to home, we directly witnessed some of the gains and achievements of the Venezuelan revolution in improving the life of people. We also felt the pride and strong commitment of the Venezuelan people in defending their revolution.

The International Peoples Assembly

Following the successful Che Guevara Internationalist Youth Brigade, social



Delcy Rodríguez (right) with the Fire This Time banner at the International People's Assembly.

movements and organizations gathered in Caracas for the program of the International Peoples Assembly. The assembly took place February 24-27 and brought together 500 participants from 90 countries, representing 181 people's movements and organizations.

During the assembly, representatives from various political parties and social movements spoke at a variety of plenaries about the importance of defending the Bolivarian revolution and the concrete tasks needed to confront imperialism when we return to each of our countries. On Tuesday, February 26, the Vice President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Delcy Rodríguez, gave a powerful speech on the hypocrisy of the imperialist war against Venezuela - as imperialist governments turn a blind eye towards human rights abuses in the region. She also spoke on the importance of the worldwide solidarity movement with Venezuela saying, "Today the independence, freedom, and dignity of the Great Homeland is playing in Venezuela, that is why it is so important to create such initiatives as the International Peoples Assembly."

International Solidarity Forever

The commitment from social justice movements around the world to stand in solidarity with the Bolivarian revolution, as it is under increasing attack from the U.S. government and their allies, was very apparent throughout all the discussions and the plenaries. Beyond the Assembly's program, participants also had the opportunity to connect and exchange with one another about their experiences in building Venezuela solidarity and planning together for future coordination and collaboration.

The Assembly program also included cultural components with performances from various international and local artists bringing together everyone involved with their diverse traditional songs and dances. Another important aspect of the Assembly was the focus on countering the right-wing and mainstream media narrative against Venezuela. This was emphasised as participants created different multimedia stories and live reports from the reality that we witnessed in Venezuela that could then be shared in different languages on social media platforms.

"The battle for Venezuela is not only for us, Venezuelans, but it is also a battle for the right to independence, to peace, to world



President Maduro speaks at the International People's Assembly in Caracas, Venezuela. February 26, 2019.

diversity, we have to achieve an equal and free world for all." Those were some of the words shared by the Constitutional President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Nicolás Maduro Moros. With a fiery intensity, President Maduro shared with participants that the attempted coup at the Colombian-Venezuela border by the United States and its lackeys was an utter failure and that the Venezuelan people will continue to stand strong in defending their sovereignty and self-determination.

Viva Venezuela! Viva Revolution!

The International Peoples Assembly closed with a final panel that included a representative from each continent who spoke on the importance of fighting to defend the Venezuelan revolution, a revolution that represents a beacon of hope for poor and oppressed people around the world. Participants agreed on final declarations from the Assembly that included a letter of solidarity with the people in struggle, a manifesto in solidarity with Venezuela and a political declaration from the Che Guevara Internationalist Youth Brigade that was read by two youth leaders: Azza Rojbi from the Fire This Time Movement for Social Justice and Kyle Haselsteiner from the Socialist Youth League of Zambia.

For all of us that participated, the Brigade and the Assembly were very educational, dynamic and inspiring experiences. As we each head back to our respective countries, we are committed to stand in solidarity with the revolutionary youth, working and oppressed people of Venezuela who are tirelessly resisting imperialist attacks on their country, by uniting our struggles we will win!

Venceremos!

Viva la Revolución Bolivariana!

US/Canada Hands Off Venezuela!

Follow Azza on Twitter: @Azza_R14

Follow Mike on Twitter: @Mikael_L7





ALBA TV Interviews

WILLIAM CASTILLO

Venezuela's Deputy Minister for International Communication of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

*Transcription &
Translation by Azza Rojbi*

ALBA TV: Now we talk here with the Deputy Minister for International Communication of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, William Castillo. Thank you very much for this time.

William, let's start with your specialty topic. We live in a world of the battle of ideas. We have talked to several people from here in the Assembly, and they tell us what they heard about Venezuela back in their countries has nothing to do with what they saw here in Venezuela. How do you evaluate the offensive of the mainstream media around the world against Venezuela?

William Castillo: We are at a decisive moment in this diplomatic and communicational political battle, we have denounced the strategies, the media campaigns of false news, of misinformation accompanying the political strategies. Communication is always a variable derived from politics. Once a policy of harassment and destruction of a country and overthrow of its legitimate government has been defined, of course, the media is aligned with the communicational objectives of that political policy. We are precisely in a defining moment because this campaign

“The peoples have never been defeated if they are organized. If we unite, if we coordinate better, we are sure that we will conquer every day more space and we will return to a diverse Latin America.”

against Venezuela has intensified. It is not only about the big media, the big news agencies. It is not only about the manipulation in social networks, but also now the media war has been expanded to a space called “private messaging,” i.e. campaigns in groups that reach people to their personal telephone with reports with false statistics, false facts. We have seen this being used in particular this weekend

when the traitors, disloyal to their military oath, released two tanks against the civilian population at the border crossing on the Simón Bolívar bridge between Colombia and Venezuela. Fortunately, there were no deaths. There were two wounded women, a police officer and a Chilean photographer. If this had escalated further, the civilians who were there would have been killed and, of course, they would present this as aggression by Venezuela against Colombia.

Hired thugs from Colombia and Brazil, with the help of criminals from Venezuela, tried to push and force the violent entry of trucks into Venezuela and were repelled and contained at the border by the Venezuelan National Armed Forces. They themselves, in the face of this failure, burned those trucks and presented to the world the version that Venezuela burned the “humanitarian aid.” Today, when the remains of those burned trucks are examined, nails, cables, steel wires were found. It is a shipment that has nothing to do with humanitarian aid.

ALBA TV: Today after the failure at the border of this show of supposed “humanitarian aid” shipment, the so-called Lima Group met once again to make decisions regarding the future of Venezuela. What can be said about that meeting? What were the decisions, let's say, and were any surprises also in what was defined in this meeting?

William Castillo: Yes. What happened today in Bogotá was a shameful thing also connected to what happened over the weekend at the borders. Over the weekend they failed in their criminal and media political operation against Venezuela. And today, of course, it was the continuation of that failure. Why? Because they have been selling the expectation of military intervention in Venezuela. However, today the Lima Group rejected the draft declaration wherein the United States had put forward a military option. No allusion to military intervention is in the final declaration. The Vice President of Brazil has just declared that Brazil will not support any use of its territory to attack Venezuela. The Foreign Minister of Uruguay has also declared that it does not accept military intervention.

The European Union had earlier a similar declaration. We're seeing the world react by saying that it is absurd for a country to declare war on Venezuela.

Venezuela is the center of the confrontation with U.S. imperialism. Since 1998 when Comandante Chávez was elected to power, the United States issued a doctrine that was inspired by their philosophy of “regime change”. It says that the United States would not allow a second Cuba in Venezuela and that any government that aims at the socialist values of equality, inclusion and sovereignty, any country that nationalizes its natural resources must undergo a regime change.

We have been in that fight for years and it has increased since 2013 after the passing of Comandante Chávez. The United States has intensified its political, media and economical campaign against Venezuela and we are precisely at a decisive moment in that confrontation. This is important for people around the world to recognize.

ALBA TV: Going back to your topic of interest, specifically, which is the strategy that we and the organized social movements of the world should adopt in terms of communication to offer solidarity to Venezuela

and to finally get out the truth about what is happening here.

William: Yes. There are three elements to the debates in the International Assembly that for me are complementary: First is the political agenda or political action, concrete political action, moving from speeches to actions, to organize a great agenda of struggles in the world. Second, I believe that research and the production of knowledge are fundamental to our struggles. The third is communication, articulation, the creation of networks that for me has two levels, the use of existent physical networks, virtual networks and technological networks and the creation of new ones using updates in technologies.

ALBA TV: So, a final question. How do you see the future of Venezuela in Latin America? How do you look to the future and what is your message of hope to the people that will see this?



Continued on page 11

"We are here to support you in your struggle"

Talk by Azza Rojbi during the Internationalist Che Guevara Youth Brigade in Venezuela

Hello compañeros and compañeras,

My name is Azza. I'm a young woman from Tunisia, living in Canada. I am speaking today because I want to share with you some of what I felt during the time I have spent here in Caracas, Venezuela.

First, I am here representing a group in Canada called the Fire This Time Movement for Social Justice. We work and organize around social justice and working class issues and struggles in Canada, but also work to make a connection with the social movements, struggles and revolutions like here in Venezuela and also in Cuba. I am speaking on behalf of my fellow organizers and co-fighters back in Canada. Let me tell you frankly and with utmost revolutionary feelings that what you are doing here in Venezuela is very important to us, to Latin America and the whole world. When we see you, we see people fighting for their sovereignty and revolution; we feel strongly inspired by your conviction, determination and spirit of the struggle. It is true today in Venezuela there are difficulties, it is true that some things might seem hard, but your struggle and commitment to your

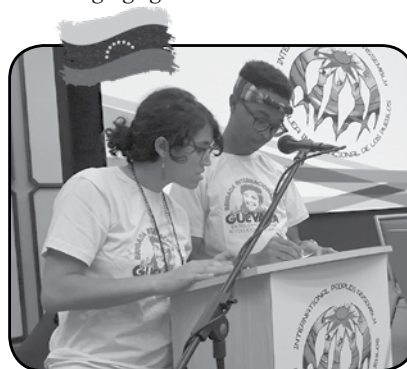
revolution is important for all of us around the world.

When we come here, when we visit Venezuela, we are not here to lecture you on how you should do things in your country. We are here to support you in your struggle. The fight you are waging against U.S. imperialism, and all imperialists are extremely important. Despite the difficulties, what I saw when I visited the school of agroecology in Caricuao with the youth from the "Francisco de Miranda" Front, is people fighting back with determination and imagination. I saw very creative young people. When they can't buy certain products because of the economic war, they make them, they plant them, they produce them, and this is very important. I saw this also when I visited Cuba. Revolutionary Venezuela echoes a very important message to the all colonial and semi-colonial countries that you can be your own master, you can regain your dignity, and you don't need imperialist

countries to tell you what to do.

If you have this determination and spirit in your heart and mind, this creativity, you will successfully continue fighting because you are this revolution and this revolution is you. As some people have said earlier, this will not be an easy road, but the Venezuelan people I met here are prepared for this road because they believe in Venezuela Bolivarian revolutionary process and their bright future and the future of the world. So, in my name and the name of my organization in Canada, I want to thank all of you here, the militants with the "Francisco de Miranda" Front, and all of my fellow members of the International Che Guevara Youth Brigade, we are here to support you, we stand firmly with you, and we fight alongside you. You represent hope for your children, for your country, for us and the world. We all must join together in the struggle to defend the Venezuelan revolution against imperialism.

Long live Chavez!




Azza (Fire This Time) & Kyle (Socialist Party of Zambia) read the political declaration of the Internationalist Che Guevara Youth Brigade at closing of the International People's Assembly

Continued from page 10

William Castillo: I believe that what is happening at this International Peoples Assembly is a sign of hope. There is a social wave in the world; the peoples have never stopped fighting. It is the struggle of people around the world. That hour is rising. We believe that it is not possible that after a decade of gains, after each advance where the peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean saw the achievements of hope, to return to the dark times. We believe that there will be mass reactions in these countries that today suffer privatization processes such as Brazil, Argentina, Peru, Chile, we will witness the response of the people to the deterioration of their rights. We believe that this will be a fundamental element to trigger the struggle of people around the world. So, I think the message of struggle is of hope; the peoples have never been defeated if they are organised. If we unite, if we coordinate better, we are sure that we will conquer every day more space and we will return to a diverse Latin America. A Latin America that plays an important role in the integration and development of the peoples struggles around the world.

ALBA TV: With this message of hope we finished this interview. Thank you very much.

William Castillo: Thank you



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Voices of Venezuelan Revolutionary Youth!

Interview & Translation
by Azza Rojbi

Youth leader Teresa Carrasquel, National Coordinator of the Venezuelan Ecological Movement (MEVEN)

My name is Teresa Carrasquel; I am an activist in the Venezuelan ecology movement. This movement raises the flag of the struggle to increase awareness about the causes and consequences of climate change. One of the main negative consequences of all the environmental problems is that certain animals are in danger of extinction. The capitalist system not only forces men and women into extreme poverty but also forces us into environmental degradation. The capitalist system is causing global climate change. As the youth of Venezuela, we raise the banner of struggle for the preservation of life which we will achieve by conquering new paradigms, making new paradigms. From the south, we build new paradigms such as ecosocialism.



"As the youth of Venezuela, we raise the banner of struggle for the preservation of life."

For our awareness campaign here we organize camping, hiking, seminars, and research on species that exist in our planet. We go to high schools, we go to universities, we go to communities, because this environmental fight is not only for the young ecologists, this environmental fight is for the entire population. All of us are responsible for now and the future generations so that they can live as we did and, more so, that they can live in a world of equality and social justice.

I invite all the North American people to raise their flag to fight against the hegemonic capitalist system in their country. We youth are responsible for changing this world for the better. This is a struggle between life and death. Death is represented by capitalism and life is represented by revolutionary socialism.

Long live the youth of the world and Long live the ecosocialists.

Speech by student leader Diego Gonzalo, at the Bolivarian University of Venezuela during the Internationalist Che Guevara Youth Brigade

Transcription by Ana Laura Torres
Translation by Azza Rojbi

My name is Diego Gonzalo, President of the Venezuelan Federation of Middle School Students and National Coordinator of the Bolivarian Student Organization. I want to start with sharing with you my story, how I got here and came to take on this important challenge that the Bolivarian revolution has given to me.

I am here today, thanks to the democratic process. A



"I am a student and I want to defend my Bolivarian revolution"

democratic process that is only done in a revolution, which is made by working and believing and having faith in oneself. I came from below, the same as several leaders who also come from below. I continue to be humble and to remember where I came from. That's the idea of any leader, to have humility. And well, here I am.

When Comandante Chavez came to power he said, "No, let's change this let's make sure everyone has the right to study, that everyone can go to school, go to college, that everyone can go to school and study." And that is one of the rights that Comandante Chavez has left us with. This right is thanks to Comandante Chavez' push for the National Constituent Assembly in 1999.

We students have been given duties, the duty to stand up for our revolution; to stand up and say I am a student and I want to defend my Bolivarian revolution. I want to go out and say, "I am a revolutionary; I follow the ideals of Simon Bolivar and Comandante Hugo Chavez." In previous years, before Comandante Chavez, you did not have the right to defend your rights as a student on camera. They stoned you; they persecuted you. Today, thanks to the Bolivarian revolution, we have that right. We have the right to go out on the streets and defend our rights as a student and defend our ideals.

Also, what about democracy? The United States says that here in Venezuela there is no democracy. How much more democracy can we students and the Venezuelan people show? They say that President Nicolás Maduro is not a president. The people decided on May 20 that the President was going to be Nicolás Maduro Moros and now he is in the presidency governing for that same Venezuelan people.

Compañeros, have you ever heard of a place with six levels of elections? First, there are elections in the classroom as Natalia was explaining. Then we go for elections within the school. After school we go to elections at the municipal level. After the

municipality, we have elections at the state level. After the state, there are elections for who will represent the State in the National Congress.

What more democracy does the United States want us to demonstrate? We students we have a right to vote, we have a right to go out and defend our rights as students. Forgive my repetition, but completely humble and full of revolutionary work we are going to build the homeland.

Since Comandante Chavez came, much has changed. Before, if you were going to an educational institution and your shoes were broken, they would not let you in. Before to study you had to be rich, you had to have money. Then Comandante Chavez came, and President Nicolas Maduro continues. Now, President Nicolas Maduro's plan provides school bags, like each of you has, for all students. This is a bag made only by the revolution in our homeland.

I congratulate all of you for coming here and for struggling for this revolution. Understand the realities of Venezuela. Here in Venezuela, as a student, a young man, despite the difficulties, despite everything that is happening, if we are fighting, I will have a smile on my face. Let this be one of the impressions that you take with you. We will not remove the smile off our faces; no one will take the smile off our face because we are happy here in Venezuela. There are difficulties, yes, but gradually we will resolve these difficulties.

We are not going to believe in any U.S. government that wants to control our lands. Here, the Venezuelan people rule. We will not allow anyone to come and say that they want to govern in our country. Our country is free and independent, Simón Bolívar ratified it that way. Our countries of Latin America are independent. Peoples are independent. Continents are independent, and that is what people stand for. That is what our revolution stands for. That's why we are here as leaders and young people to defend our land and country.

We will continue to work for the revolution.

We, students, are here to defend our country, to defend our ideals, the legacy of Simon Bolivar and Comandante Commander Chavez and today the ideals given to us by President Nicolas Maduro. And so, brothers and sisters, I invite you to follow this Bolivarian revolution because this revolution is here to stay. This revolution is not going to change just because someone orders it to change. This revolution is here to stay because people believe in this revolution and firmly say that it will continue.

Thank you, compañeros, for coming here to see the realities of Venezuela. See that Venezuela suffers because we do suffer. But know that Venezuela is going to change. Understand that this revolution is going to address all our problems thanks to our young leaders. What country allows more participation of young people? In what country are young people choosing their own leaders in a democratic process? What country allows young people to go out and defend their rights with their compañeros? What young person?

We are going out on the streets to defend the revolution, to defend our rights. Let's make our countries independent, free and sovereign. Thank you.

Long live Chávez! Long live the Bolivarian homeland! Long live Fidel Castro! Long live Che Guevara! Long live the homelands!

*Interview & Translation
by Azza Rojbi & Mike Larson*



***“History is on our side;
we will continue to win.”***

Luismar Lopez: From Venezuela, from the International Assembly of the People. Our organization shares a cornfield in the state of Lara and Portuguesa, a commune that has broken with that border between state and state because it is formed between two states, Lara and Portuguese. Here we are organizing the People's Power, young adults, children, women also because we talk about the construction of the commune, but also talk about the anti patriarchal commune.

Voices of Revolutionary Peasants from the Maizal Socialist Commune in Venezuela

We are a commune that is organized for production, we are producing around 1800 kilos of corn, we are producing chilli, chives, coriander. We have a company for the production of meat. At this moment we have around two thousand heads of pigs, eight hundred cattle. We also have a dairy company; we are producing milk, whey and cheese.

We also have an ideological and political training school where we integrate women, young people, and our community seedbeds, which are all our children. Well there in this space, we are raising that flag of socialism, raising those flags of the “commune or nothing” that Commander Chavez told us in 2012 in the “golpe de timón” (“Set A New Course”) speech. Well, from here we are resisting but also confronting those attacks of imperialism. We are demonstrating to the whole world that we can, that the organized people can raise this fight of socialism and also defeat them because we have shown in these 20 years of revolution that we have defeated them

and we will continue to lift them. History is on our side; we will continue to win.

Esly Matos: Greetings, the Comuna El Maizal apart from being a productive commune, is also a model of development that Comandante Chavez suggested to us, that is a transitional model towards socialism. We understood that the political way to reach socialism is the way of the commune where the people are self-governing their territory. At the same time, we are expanding that self-government of all people to our whole perspective. Greetings to the people of North America. The people who resist imperialism also within their own countries. We are with you, and I know that you are with us and, indeed, very grateful to the people of Canada, the people of the United States, who know that they support us and carry out their struggle and defense of the Venezuelan people. Thank you.



By Janine Solanki

The U.S. government and their imperialist allies, including Canada, have been escalating their dangerous campaign against the people of Venezuela and their democratically elected President, Nicolas Maduro. The U.S. government recently backed an attempted coup against President Maduro, increased sanctions and has staged dangerous provocations at Venezuela's borders. While mainstream media has kicked their anti-Venezuelan government rhetoric into overdrive, it is up to the Venezuela solidarity movement to provide information about what is truly happening in Venezuela.

Fire This Time (FTT) Venezuela Solidarity Campaign has been sending its organizers on educational and solidarity trips to Venezuela so that they can provide first-hand accounts of what is happening on the ground in Venezuela. Most recently, FTT organizers Azza Rojbi (also an editorial board member of Fire This Time newspaper) and Mike Larson participated in the Che Guevara International Youth Brigade and the International People's Assembly in Venezuela.

On March 2, just one day after they returned from two weeks in Venezuela, FTT Venezuela Solidarity Campaign organized a report back event titled, “Trump and Trudeau Hands Off Maduro! Venezuelan Democracy vs. Imperialist Aggression”. The event took place at the Vancouver Public Library Central Branch in downtown Vancouver, and over 80 people came out to hear Azza and Mike's eyewitness accounts from Venezuela.



Eyewitness Accounts from Venezuela!

Alison Bodine, the coordinator of the FTT Venezuela Solidarity Campaign, welcomed everyone to the evening and started the night with music videos from Venezuelan artists supportive of the Bolivarian Revolution. Alison then spoke to give background into what 20 years of the Bolivarian Revolution has achieved for poor and working people in Venezuela, and how the U.S. attempts to turn back this progress.

Azza and Mike, still reflecting the excitement of their experiences in Venezuela, then spoke and narrated photos and videos from Venezuela. One video showed a sea of people on the streets of Caracas, marching in a gigantic march and rally in support of their democratically elected President Maduro. In the video, Mike said, “This is what you don't see on the CBC in Canada!” - highlighting how in Canada our mainstream media is ignoring the huge support that the

Venezuelan people are demonstrating for President Maduro. In some of the photos Azza recounted how they volunteered with the “Movimiento Somos Venezuela” (We Are Venezuela Movement) who visit homes in their communities and find out who needs medical care, or improvements to their home, and then with the help of the Venezuelan government are empowered to correct these things and better their communities. Azza and Mike had countless stories of Venezuelans they met who are active in their community organizations, or who explained to them how the Bolivarian Revolution had improved their lives. Azza spoke in depth on how important it is for Venezuela to be defended, and for people in Canada and the U.S. to look beyond the mainstream media to see the amazing achievements and progress being made in Venezuela, which must be defended from the U.S. attempts to destroy it!

Their presentation was followed by a discussion period with many questions put to the speakers. Even after the event came to a close, participants were eager to talk to Azza and Mike and ask more questions about their experiences in Venezuela.

The presentation was live-streamed and can be watched in full on the Fire This Time Facebook page, at www.facebook.com/firethistimemovement/videos

More report back events are to come, as more Fire This Time organizers participate in trips to Venezuela and return with their valuable experiences. Visit www.firethistime.net or follow on Facebook or Twitter @FTT_np.



Manifesto in Solidarity with Venezuela

The following manifesto was approved within the final documents of the International People's Assembly held in Caracas, Venezuela. For a report on the Assembly's activities and Fire This Time's participation go to page 8.

1. Assembled together in Caracas, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, between February 24 and 27, 2019, delegates from more than 90 countries from the five continents, representing social and political organizations and movements reaffirm our defense of the sovereignty and self-determination of Venezuela, we pronounce ourselves in defense of the Bolivarian Revolution and the legitimate and constitutional President, Nicolás Maduro.

2. During the last two decades, the Bolivarian Revolution is moving forward in a process and project of deep transformation, based on participatory and protagonist democracy, focused on peoples interests, which has communal organization and aims the feminist socialism proposed by Hugo Chávez. With this perspective, it has produced changes in the horizon that also involve the construction of a multicenter and multipolar world, with important changes in the neocolonial relations that affect our region and the South. With a vision of redistribution of wealth that comes from the plentiful resources that the country produces, Venezuela has attained unprecedented results in its history with universal access to public and free education, eradicating illiteracy and allowing unprecedented access to higher education. Similar achievements are registered in health, housing and other social rights.

3. US imperialism, guardian of the corporate, financing, military and transnational interests it embraces, is determined to bring the process down in order to take direct control of the natural resources. To give an end to the proposal of sovereignty and self-determination, the United States has unleashed all hybrid and permanent war strategies; it has tried all possible tactics: coups, terrorism, financial speculation, economic blockade, induced inflation, among others.

4. Since 2008, there is a clear structural, multidimensional, and historical crisis of capitalism; in this context, the United States seeks to maintain its world hegemony by all means, including war, which results in aggression, invasions and wars to seize natural wealth, and control the markets, the territories and the governments. In this sense, the geoeconomic dispute with China and Russia threatens to lead humanity towards a total war.

5. Thus, in order to protect free market and the freedom of corporations to plunder and exploit our peoples, in various parts of the world, they are moving forward with economic pressures, such as the blockade against Venezuela, Cuba and Iran, and war aggressions, as those in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Yemen, the Democratic Republic of the Congo; and land occupations such as Palestine. They also impose economic, psychological, and cultural wars, such as the one that has been violating Venezuela for several years. Paradoxically, it is the "defense of human rights and democracy" that has served as a crutch to camouflage the most serious

is now expressed in the external pressures promoted by ad hoc bodies, such as the so-called Lima group, which, coordinated with sectors of the Venezuelan far right, seeks to establish an authoritarian coup d'état ignoring Venezuelan democratic institutions. We note with surprise that even institutions, such as the European Union, succumb to US pressures and, contrary to international law and democracy, proceed to recognize a self-proclaimed "president", who no one has elected. This is supported by an ideological and communicational engineering based on the dissemination of fake news and fictitious scenarios, which are positioned both through corporate media and digital networks.

8. Today, in Venezuela, sovereignty and self-determination are at issue, these are pillars of the dignity of the peoples that seek to build a future for humanity and fairer and more egalitarian societies. For this reason, and in internationalist solidarity with the people of Venezuela and their legitimate government chaired by Nicolás Maduro, we proclaim:



collective aggressions. But the peoples resist and have managed to stop these attempts of control as it was the situation in Crimea and Syria.

6. The imposition of the rules of the game of corporate and globalized capitalism can only be sustained by eliminating democratic possibilities and rights of the working class, spreading chaos, destruction and death. Therefore, we reject the escalation of pressure from the United States government, such as the military action that, disguised as "humanitarian aid", advances against the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. This is a new phase of the war that seeks to reinstate a model of political subordination, which can be seen in the aim of overthrowing the elected president Nicolás Maduro.

7. A new moment of this interventionist plan

1. To stop the economic blockade that leads to the suffering of the people, threatens the economic and productive project and the redistributive policies, and which has already cost Venezuela more than 30 million dollars.

2. To defend sovereignty, participatory and protagonist democracy and the Venezuelan right to organize its economic project and manage its natural resources with based on sovereign criteria.

3. The peoples of the world want peace; we do not want another war. Latin America and the Caribbean are peaceful territories, as it has been declared by CELAC in 2014, and as it needs to be projected into the future. Venezuela has the right to solve any difference through dialog and the multiple mechanisms provided by its own constitution and within the framework of the public international law.

4. The peoples of the world, represented by the International Peoples' Assembly, defend the Bolivarian Revolution as a project that provides a sense of ethics and future for humanity.

We call the entire world to raise its voice to build on peace and stop the war.

Caracas, February 27, 2019

Manifiesto de Solidaridad con Venezuela

El siguiente manifiesto fue aprobado dentro de los documentos finales de la Asamblea Internacional de los Pueblos celebrada en Caracas, Venezuela. Para leer un informe sobre las actividades de la Asamblea y la participación de Fire This Time, vaya a la página 8.

1. Reunidos y reunidas en Caracas, República Bolivariana de Venezuela, entre los días 24 y 27 de febrero de 2019, representantes de movimientos y organizaciones sociales y políticas de más de 90 países, de los cinco continentes, reafirmamos nuestra defensa de la soberanía y la autodeterminación de Venezuela, nos pronunciamos en defensa de la Revolución Bolivariana y del presidente legítimo y constitucional, Nicolás Maduro.

2. Desde hace dos décadas, la Revolución Bolivariana avanza en un proceso y propuesta de transformación profunda, basada en una democracia participativa y protagónica, centrada en los intereses populares, que cuenta con una organización comunal y apunta hacia socialismo feminista propuesto por Hugo Chávez. Con esa perspectiva ha producido cambios de horizonte, que involucran incluso la construcción de un mundo multicéntrico y pluripolar, con cambios sustantivos en las relaciones neocoloniales que afectan a la región y al Sur. Con una visión redistributiva de las riquezas provenientes de los recursos abundantes que el país produce, Venezuela ha obtenido resultados inéditos en su historia al universalizar la educación pública y gratuita, consiguiendo tanto la erradicación del analfabetismo como una inserción sin precedentes a la educación superior. Similares logros se observan en salud, vivienda y otros derechos sociales.

3. El imperialismo estadounidense, guardián de los intereses corporativos, financieros, militares y transnacionales que abraja, está determinado a derrumbar este proceso, para tomar control directo de las riquezas naturales. Para terminar con la propuesta de soberanía y autodeterminación, Estados Unidos ha desatado todas las estrategias de guerra híbrida y permanente, ha intentado todas las tácticas posibles: golpes de Estado, terrorismo, especulación financiera, bloqueo económico, e inflación inducida y otros.

4. Desde 2008 se evidencia una crisis estructural, multidimensional e histórica del capitalismo, en ese marco Estados Unidos busca sostener su hegemonía mundial por todos los medios, entre ellos el bélico, que se traduce en agresiones, invasiones y guerras para apoderarse de las riquezas naturales, controlar mercados, territorios y gobiernos. En esa misma línea, la disputa geoeconómica que ha emprendido con China y Rusia amenaza con conducir la humanidad hacia una guerra total.

5. Así, para proteger el libre mercado y libertad de las corporaciones para saquear y explotar a nuestros pueblos, en diversas partes del mundo avanzan con presiones económicas, tales como el bloqueo contra Venezuela, Cuba e Irán y cometen agresiones bélicas, como

sucede en Irak,
Afganistán,
Libia,



Yemen,
República
Democrática

del Congo; y ocupaciones tales como la de Palestina. También imponen guerras económicas, psicológicas, culturales, como la que infringen a Venezuela desde hace varios años. Paradójicamente, es la “defensa de los derechos humanos y de la democracia” que ha servido de muletila para camuflar las más graves agresiones colectivas. Pero los pueblos resisten y han logrado frenar estos intentos de control como ha sucedido en Crimea y Siria.

6. La imposición de las reglas del juego del capitalismo corporativo y globalizado solo puede sostenerse eliminando las posibilidades democráticas y los derechos de la clase trabajadora, diseminando caos, destrucción y muerte. Por eso, rechazamos la escalada de

presiones del gobierno de Estados Unidos, tales como la acción militar que, disfrazada de “ayuda humanitaria”, avanza contra la República Bolivariana de Venezuela. Esta última es una nueva fase de la guerra para reinstaurar un modelo de subordinación política, que se cristaliza con la pretensión de derrocar al presidente electo Nicolás Maduro.

7. Un nuevo momento de este plan injerencista, se expresa ahora en las presiones externas impulsadas desde instancias ad-hoc, tales como el llamado grupo de Lima, que articulados con sectores de la extrema derecha venezolana, pretenden instaurar un autoritario golpe de Estado y desconocer las instituciones democráticas venezolanas. Constatamos con sorpresa que incluso instancias como la Unión Europea, sucumben a las presiones de Estados Unidos y, en sentido contrario al derecho internacional y la democracia, llegan hasta a reconocer a un “presidente” autoproclamado, que no fue elegido por nadie. Esto se respalda en una ingeniería ideológica y comunicacional basada en la diseminación de noticias falsas y escenarios ficticios, que se posicionan tanto a través de los medios de comunicación corporativos como por las redes digitales.

8. Hoy en Venezuela está en disputa la soberanía y la autodeterminación, que son pilares de la dignidad de los pueblos, que buscan construir un futuro para la humanidad y sociedades más justas e igualitarias. Por eso, y en solidaridad internacionalista con el pueblo de Venezuela y su gobierno legítimo, presidido por Nicolás Maduro, manifestamos:

1. El cese del bloqueo económico que: infringe sufrimiento al pueblo, atenta contra el proyecto económico-productivo y las políticas redistributivas; y que ya le ha costado a Venezuela más de 30 mil millones de dólares.

2. Defendemos la soberanía, la democracia participativa y protagónica y el derecho de Venezuela a organizar su proyecto económico y gestionar sus recursos naturales bajo criterios soberanos.

3. Los pueblos del mundo queremos la paz, no queremos más guerras. América Latina y el Caribe es una zona de paz, así lo reconoció la CELAC en 2014 y así debe proyectarse hacia el futuro. Venezuela tiene derecho a resolver cualquier diferencia a través del diálogo y de los múltiples mecanismos que prevé su propia constitución y en el marco del derecho internacional público.

4. Los pueblos del mundo, representados en la Asamblea Internacional de los Pueblos, defendemos la Revolución Bolivariana como un proyecto que aporta sentidos éticos y de futuro para la humanidad.

Llamamos al mundo entero a levantar sus voces para construir la paz y detener la guerra!

Caracas, 27 de febrero de 2019.



*"While we have capitalism,
this planet will not be saved.
Capitalism is contrary to life,
to the environment, to human
beings, to women — to all forms
of life."*

***Berta Cáceres**
1973 - 2016*

*"Mientras tengamos
capitalismo este planeta no se
va a salvar porque es contrario
a la vida, a la ecología, al ser
humano y a la mujer - a todas
las propuestas de vida."*

***International Women's Day
March 8, 2019***

Artist: Carlos Lopez Rosa (CALO)

www.firethistime.net

REPEAL BILL C-51 & SCRAP BILL C-59!

4 YEARS IN THE STRUGGLE TO DEFEND HUMAN AND DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS IN CANADA



Vancouver, March 14, 2015

By Thomas Davies

It was about this month in 2015 when former Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper must have been starting to get worried. On the heels of a lone-wolf terrorist attack on the Parliament Building in Ottawa, his government had swiftly introduced the far-reaching “Anti-Terrorism Law” Bill C-51. The Bill’s massive empowerment of police, spy and government agencies at the expense of human and democratic rights was backfiring, and public outcry and mobilization were growing daily.

In the end, Harper was able to pass Bill C-51 but lost the Federal election soon after. The main beneficiary was the Liberal Party and its leader Justin Trudeau. Despite voting in favour of Bill C-51, they still campaigned on the slogan of “Real Change Now” and promised “swift changes” to protect democratic and human rights in Canada if elected.

Four years later and it’s important to look at the state of human and democratic rights in Canada, and what lessons can be learned from the ebbs and flows of the movement which was decisive in the downfall of one political leader but has not yet been able to accomplish its original objective of repealing Bill C-51. Especially as candidates are already being chosen for the upcoming 2019 Federal Election, and PM Trudeau has totally failed in his promise of “Real

Change Now,” we need to learn the lessons to move forward in the ongoing fight to defend and extend human and democratic rights in Canada.

Action and Reaction

“Canadians are targeted by these terrorists for no other reason than that we are Canadians. They want to harm us because they hate our society and the values it represents. Because they hate pluralism, they hate tolerance, and they hate the freedom of others, the freedom we enjoy. Through their deeds, these jihadists have declared war on Canada, and with their words, they urge others to join their campaign of terror against Canadians. Ladies and gentlemen, it would be a grave mistake to ignore their threats.”

– Then Prime Minister Stephen Harper. January 30, 2015, in one of his first speeches on Bill C-51

“Three people have died in Canada from domestic terrorist attacks in the last twenty years. Almost that many people die every day at work, mostly from unsafe working conditions. A woman is killed on average every six days in Canada by a current or former spouse or boyfriend. Ten people die from suicide in Canada every single day. Yet the Conservative government has cut funding from women’s and mental health programs and made it easier for employers to get away with unsafe working conditions. If they were so concerned about protecting

people, why are they blowing up the threat of terrorism and ignoring real problems which can actually be addressed?”

– Fire This Time Article, 2015

One of the initial challenges of confronting Bill C-51 was summarizing its massive attacks. At 62 pages, its full name was “An Act to enact the Security of Canada Information Sharing Act and the Secure Air Travel Act, to amend the Criminal Code, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act, and the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other Acts.”

A good summary of the most offensive aspects was provided by the BC Civil Liberties Association in a statement regarding their ongoing opposition to Bill C-51,

“We argued that privacy rights would be threatened by an exponential increase in personal information sharing across government agencies and foreign actors, without safeguards or accountability mechanisms.”

We questioned CSIS’s [Canada’s secret police] extraordinary new powers to take covert action, and, incredibly, to seek judicial warrants pre-authorizing its agents to violate the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

We warned that the new criminal offences of promoting and advocating terror would chill

legitimate dissent; that lower thresholds on already exceptionally broad powers, such as preventive arrest, would further undermine due process rights; and that the procedural flaws in the new Secure Air Travel Act would unfairly restrict Canadians' mobility rights.

In our view, all of this amounted to overboard, unnecessary, dangerous, and unconstitutional legislation. Although we asked the government repeatedly, not once did we receive specifics on how any part of C-51 could have prevented the attacks of 2014, or on why pre-existing legislation was insufficient to protect us."

Real Movement Possibility

While the Harper government had hoped to stoke the fires of Islamophobia and fear, Bill C-51 was such a blatant attack on human rights that they were faced with growing protests across Canada, including a National Day of Action on March 14 which included 68 coordinated protests. The Guardian newspaper noted, "No legislation in memory has united such a diverse array of prominent opponents as the proposed legislation...The campaign to stop Bill C-51 grew to include virtually every civil-rights group, law professor, retired judge, author, editorialist and public intellectual in Canada."

It was during this upswing that the Working Group to Stop Bill C-51 based in Vancouver began organizing well attended weekly picket and petition drive actions in the Lower Mainland. Four years later and the Committee is at well over 200 consecutive actions.

As we now come into the 2019 Federal Election with Bill C-51 still firmly in place and nothing to show for in terms of Liberal government gains for human rights, we are justified in saying that this hope was understandable but misguided. Trudeau is a fraud, and if we don't learn the hard lessons of the last four years, it's going to be impossible to move forward.

Trudeau's Tactic: Delay, Delay, Delay

Newly elected Trudeau and the Liberal Party had promised that Bill C-51 would be "overhauled without delay" despite the fact that all major polls showed that a clear majority wanted a simple repeal of the law. Masters of delay, their new tactic was to promise a "public consultation" on Bill C-51 and matters of national security. One letter writer to the Toronto Star summarized why this was a trick, "Public Safety Minister Ralph Goodale



says he wants our input regarding changes to the national security framework so the government can "get it right." It all sounds terribly democratic and inclusive but just why does he need to consult us to learn that we want our democratic rights, privileges, privacy, representation, and our will to be respected and protected? We remain innocent until proven guilty. No need for further investigation."

Bill C-59: Same Same But Different

So Trudeau's long awaited solution to Bill C-51 became a new law titled Bill C-59. It tightened some of Bill C-51's language and created some new oversight mechanisms, but maintained many of the worst aspects of Bill C-51. Our initial response in Fire This Time was was this:

"Most importantly, if all of Bill C-59 is passed our human rights are still overall much

behind where we were when it's predecessor Bill C-51 was first passed. Taking one step forward after taking 12 steps back is not a victory. Especially when we didn't need to step backward in the first place.

Crucially, CSIS still has powers of "disruption" which include "limiting" the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Under Bill C-59 they would have also have broad new immunity from prosecution for breaking laws!

Seventeen different government agencies will still be sharing your personal information without a warrant.

Police will still be able to detain us without charges for a week preventatively. They can continue to intimidate people into signing "peace bonds" limiting their freedoms."

The Liberals railroaded the Bill through parliament, refused amendments, and used their majority to pass the Bill and send it to the Senate. In the Senate is where it has sat, moving along at a snail's pace and now in danger of not being passed before the next election while the Liberals deal with crisis after the crisis. This Bill would ensure a status quo under Bill C-51 the Liberals are more than comfortable with.

The Campaign Has Continued

Through all the maneuverings of the past four years, the Working Group to Stop Bill C-51 continued its weekly action campaign – adding "Scrap Bill C-59!" to its demands and alternating between pickets at busy transit points and banner drops over rush hour highway overpasses. That's over 200 actions, and while it has been a core of organizers who have committed to making sure their Monday afternoons are free, the public response has always justified continued engagement. In over 200 actions there have been over 50,000 information brochures distributed and 4,000 petition signatures collected. Without exaggeration, less than 25 people have ever actually expressed support for either Bill C-51 or C-59 during thousands of conversations. There has never been anything resembling a movement or independent public action demanding limitations on democratic and human rights. Despite this obvious contradiction, both Conservative and Liberal governments have been committed to undermining both.

Where We Go From Here?

We know that laws limiting freedoms

usually start by using racist targeting of immigrants and then move to full scale attacks on those who are organizing to defend their rights against undemocratic attacks. During World War I, government fear campaigns and targeting of Ukrainians, Austrians, and Germans moved almost immediately to attacks on trade unions and arrests of antiwar organizers. During World War II, racist attacks on Japanese, Italians, and Germans again moved quickly to attacks on working class organizations and silencing antiwar voices.

If you think this is all in the distant past, remember that not so long ago 1,105 people were arrested in the largest mass arrest in Canadian history during the 2010 G20 Summit in Toronto. The vast majority were taking part in peaceful protests and were later released without charges.

Preparing for a Crisis

We've been saying for the past four years that Bill C-51 and C-59 have absolutely nothing to do with preventing terrorism, and absolutely everything to do with giving the government and police broad new powers to crack down on dissent.



Poor and working peoples' lives are getting harder. Income inequality is growing. You would be hard pressed to find someone who would say that healthcare, education or their quality of life has improved in the past ten years.

According to credit bureau information agency Equifax, the debt-to-income ratio in Canada (how much total debt you have relative to your annual income) climbed to 173.8% in the third quarter of 2018. That's more than 20% higher than in 2008. Consumer debt including mortgages increased to nearly \$1.91 trillion, up from \$1.82 trillion in 2017. With the cost of living increases, while wages stagnate, people borrow money they will never be able to repay. Bankruptcies were also up 15 percent in the last half of 2018.

Does that look sustainable? The government of Canada knows it's only a matter of time before people react to their worsening conditions.

Use It or Lose It

Poor and working people demonstrated they are willing to mobilize to defend our democratic and human rights, but need organization and leadership as well as support from different organizations representing our interests.

The government of Canada wouldn't be trying to limit our ability to organize if they weren't afraid of the possibilities if we united and mobilized based on our common interests. As the capitalist economic crisis deepens, they will continue trying to transfer all of the burdens onto the shoulders of poor and working people, and prevent us from organizing to defend our rights and livelihoods. The struggle to defend and extend our democratic and human rights will only get more important in the years to come. We need to do everything we can to educate, organize and mobilize to "Repeal Bill C-51 and Scrap Bill C-59!"

Follow Thomas on Twitter: @thomasdavies59

4 YEARS LATER, THE STRUGGLE TO DEFEND HUMAN AND DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS IN CANADA CONTINUES!

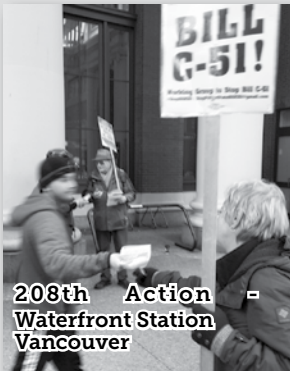
By Thomas Davies


"A right is not what someone gives you; it's what no one can take from you."
-Former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark

This month of February was the coldest ever in Vancouver, topped with five times more snow than average. Freezing temperatures did not deter the Working Group to Stop Bill C-51, which continued its weekly picket and petition campaign, regardless of persistent snow storms, to reach its 208th consecutive weekly action.


The Working Group focused primarily within Vancouver itself, at the working class transit hubs of Collingwood-Joyce, Main Street-Chinatown and Lougheed Town Centre. The month culminated with a very busy picket at the Waterfront Skytrain Station – the busiest transit point in all of Greater Vancouver. A solid core of organizers continue to show up, but there are also new people who decide to contribute every week as well.

There continues to be a lot of questions regarding Prime Minister Trudeau's approach to democratic and human rights, and a lot of frustration at the weak and delayed response to Bill C-51 - which is stretching into the upcoming Federal election campaign. More and more people see PM Trudeau's Bill C-59 as just a continuation of Bill C-51, and the joint demands of "Repeal Bill C-51 and Scrap Bill C-59" continue to strike a chord wherever the campaign actions take place. Repeal Bill C-51! Scrap Bill C-59! Our Security Lies in Defending the Rights of All!





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by Alison Bodine

The miserably failed “humanitarian aid” delivery into Venezuela on February 23 is another nail in the coffin of the U.S. government’s coup attempt against President Nicolas Maduro and the Bolivarian revolutionary process in Venezuela.

Before this day, the U.S. government and their allies, including Canada, thought that their puppet, self-declared “interim President” Juan Guaidó, still had a chance. The U.S. government made a callous bet that the installation of Guaidó, together with a cruel and illegal sanctions campaign against Venezuela would be enough to force the people of Venezuela to overthrow the democratically elected government of President Nicolas Maduro. However, they were badly wrong. The heroic people of Venezuela have stood up in defence of their sovereignty, self-determination, and their President, Nicolas Maduro. Together, they have defeated the imperialist attempted coup.

Was the “Humanitarian Aid” Ever Humanitarian?

The U.S. government and Guaidó, together with major mainstream media, have been spreading lies and manipulations about Venezuela and President Maduro to justify their illegal and anti-democratic intervention. It was especially clear when it came to how they built the case for the “humanitarian aid” delivery into Venezuela

scheduled for February 23, 2019.

A good place to start to uncover this deception is to ask the question - was the “humanitarian aid” ever humanitarian?

Before the “aid” was loaded onto U.S. military aircraft and flown into Colombia, it was already a disaster in the making. The aid was to be provided and delivered by the USAID (United States Agency for International Development). Both the Red Cross and the United Nations rejected the humanitarian aid scheme of the U.S. government. As a United Nations spokesperson reminded reporters in New York City, “Humanitarian action needs to be independent of political, military or other objectives.” Undoubtedly this was not the case with the USAID delivery. The “humanitarian aid” was nothing but a thinly veiled pretext for furthering the U.S. backed coup against President Maduro.

And what about the claim that the government of President Maduro is not accepting international aid?

The week before the U.S. government’s attempted “aid” delivery, Venezuela’s Health Ministry reported that 64 containers, amounting to 933-tons of medicine and medical aid arrived in Venezuela, mostly from China and Cuba. Also, in February the Red Cross increased its budget in Venezuela to \$18 million. The United Nations continues to work with the government of Venezuela

to provide food, clothing and services to people in Venezuela. This includes \$9.2 million in health and nutritional aid which the government of Venezuela requested at the end of November 2018 to alleviate some of the devastating impacts of increasing U.S. sanctions. The government of Venezuela also receives support from the UN World Health Organization (WHO) and the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO) on immunization campaigns and disease control. These few examples alone are much more than the 200 tons of “humanitarian aid” that the USAID was planning on delivering on February 23. The claim that President Maduro does not accept international aid is also lie intended to demonize President Maduro to win favour for U.S. intervention.

On February 23, the people of Venezuela were not fooled by the USAID



Nicolas Maduro, President of Venezuela with supporters during Carnival celebrations this year

“humanitarian aid” scheme. U.S. government stooge Guaidó failed to bring enough supporters to the border to create the “aid avalanche” he promised. The Venezuelan army stood with the democratically elected government of President Maduro and refused to accept “humanitarian aid” into Venezuelan territory at the Colombia/Venezuela border, and rejected a similar stunt at the Brazil/Venezuela border. They recognized the “aid” for what it was – a provocation by the U.S. government and their counter-revolutionary right-wing allies in Colombia and Venezuela.

What About Sanctions?

The omission is just another form of lying. And, yes, there is a glaring omission when it comes to the imperialist rhetoric and reporting about Venezuela and Venezuela’s struggling economy. Sanctions.

As Alfred de Zayas, Independent Expert on the Promotion of a Democratic and Equitable International Order from the United Nations said in an interview on the Empire Files (@EmpireFiles) “What is particularly cynical is to cause an economic crisis that threatens to become a humanitarian crisis. That is what the United States has done through the financial blockade, through the sanctions.”

U.S., Canada, European Union and Swiss sanctions are so pervasive that even to call the USAID “humanitarian aid,” a band-aid is an overstatement. The U.S. government offered \$20 million of aid to Venezuela, while at the same time these crippling sanctions rob the people of Venezuela of more than \$30 million a day.

Since January 23, 2019, the U.S. government has further increased the already devastating sanctions to enforce its coup effort. The new restriction includes imposing strict sanctions against Venezuela’s state-owned oil company Petróleos de Venezuela, S.A. (PDVSA). As the U.S. government has consciously planned, this will dramatically impact Venezuela’s imports and exports and continue to drain their economy of the U.S. dollars which are required for Venezuela to participate in international trade.

Additionally, sanctions have enabled the U.S. government and their allies to steal billions of dollars that belong to Venezuela, which they are attempting to redirect to their appointed “interim President” Guaido. The stolen money includes \$1.2 billion in gold that the Bank of England refuses to give back to Venezuela, as well as billions of dollars in profits from Citgo – the U.S.-based distribution arm of the PDVSA oil company.

Even before the PDVSA sanctions were



implemented, Venezuela’s imports had dropped from \$60 billion a year in 2013 to \$12 billion in 2017. At the same time, the Financial Crimes Control Network (FINCEN) of the U.S. Treasury has also been ordered to monitor any financial transactions that the government of Venezuela makes. In this way, the U.S. and their imperialist allies prevent Venezuela from paying for imports, even when it has the funds. For example, when the government of Venezuela went to purchase 300,000 doses of insulin, Citibank closed all their accounts and refused to complete the transaction.

Is There an International Consensus Against President Maduro?

No, there is not an “international consensus” against the government of President Maduro. Although the U.S. government claims to have the support of 50 countries, that means that they do not have the support of the other 143 countries that are recognized by the United Nations. Most of the world continues to stand with Venezuela and the democratically elected government of Maduro. Maduro’s support includes almost the entire continent of Africa, except Morocco, and the entire region of Asia and Oceania, except Australia. There is, in fact, not even a consensus in support of the coup from Europe, where Italy, Greece, Norway, Slovakia, Cyprus and Belarus have all refused to join with the United States. In Latin America and the Caribbean, the U.S. government and Canada were even forced to create the so-called Lima Group of countries because they could not convince enough member-states in the Organization of American States to support their campaign to overthrow the government of President Maduro.

As just one example of international solidarity with Venezuela, CARICOM, an organization that represents 15 states in the Caribbean released a statement on February 25. The statement read, “The Community maintains that the solution must come from among the Venezuelan people and abides by the internationally recognized and accepted principles of non-interference and non-intervention in the affairs of states, respect for sovereignty, adherence to the rule of law, and respect for human rights and democracy.”

If No One Supports President Maduro How is He Still President?

When was the last time you saw photos and videos tens of thousands of people mobilizing in the streets of cities all over Venezuela in support of President Maduro? When was the last time you heard an interview with someone in Venezuela calling for an end to cruel U.S. sanctions?

However, if there is one thing that can be shown from the failed U.S.-led coup in Venezuela, it is that the democratically elected government of President Maduro continues to be very popular. The coup against Venezuela has failed because the mass majority of people in Venezuela support the government, and want to defend, and continue to extend, the gains they have made in the 20 years of the Bolivarian revolutionary process.

What are some of these gains? By redirecting Venezuela’s wealth from the pockets of international corporations and the wealthiest Venezuelans into social programs, the Bolivarian revolutionary process has brought millions of people out of extreme poverty. There have been remarkable gains in housing,



healthcare, and education. Including, the eradication of illiteracy and the Great Housing Mission (GMVV) which has constructed and delivered 2.5 million homes to Venezuela's poorest and most marginalized people since 2011.

Despite the imperialist attempt to strangle their economy and starve the people of Venezuela, Venezuela continues to rank high on the Human Development Index (HDI). Based on 2017 data, the 2018 HDI reports that Venezuela has a "high human development," putting the country 78th of 189 countries. It means Venezuela has a higher HDI than both Brazil and Colombia which are key right-wing allies in the U.S. war drive.

Because these well-established statistics do not fit into the false narrative of the U.S. government, they have been almost completely left out of mainstream media reporting on Venezuela. It's a media blackout. The gains of the Bolivarian revolutionary process and the voices of people in Venezuela that support President Maduro have been silenced by imperialist governments and their lackeys in mainstream media.

Do the Governments of the US and Canada Care About People in Venezuela?

To answer this, let's follow some of what the



Community organizers deliver "CLAP" boxes containing basic food items; provided to Venezuelans by the government to help battle the sanctions and the economic war.

U.S. has said and done since the February 23 "humanitarian aid" failure. On February 25, the U.S. government organized a summit in Colombia to maintain momentum for puppet Guaidó and their attempted coup. U.S. Vice President Mike Pence was there, along with countries of the Lima Group, including Canada and 11 Latin American right-wing governments. Although the Lima Group stopped short of supporting U.S. military intervention in Venezuela, this summit further exposed that the U.S. government and their allies have no interest in the "human rights" of the people of Venezuela.

To which, the Foreign Minister of Canada, Chrystia Freeland replied, "We are discussing with our partners now ways that sanctions list can be expanded in order to have even more bite." The government of Canada's quick support for U.S. sanctions and aggression against Venezuela is of no surprise. As with the United States, the government of Canada could care less about the human rights of people in Venezuela. Take a look at the Twitter accounts of Chrystia Freeland or U.S. National Security Advisor John Bolton; they are all too happy to share evidence that the people of Venezuela are struggling under their sanctions and brutality.

The government of Canada is every bit as interested as the United States in overthrowing President Maduro and reversing the gains of the Bolivarian revolutionary process. How else can the government of Canada protect the interests of Canadian mining and resource extraction companies in Venezuela and throughout Latin America? Surely, letting a country like Venezuela nationalize its natural resources and use those profits to build social services instead of lining the pockets of foreign corporations is out of the question.

To support the U.S. government in this dangerous proposal, Juan Guaidó and his coup supporters promoted the concept of the "Responsibility to Protect." Most recently, "Responsibility to Protect" was used for the bloody imperialist assault against Haiti in 2004 and Libya in 2011. Right-wing U.S. Senator Marco Rubio, in fact, made the direct connection between Venezuela and Libya when on February 24 he tweeted a photo of the murder of Gadhafi within a long line of tweets on Venezuela.

The people of Haiti, Libya, Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Yemen and every other country that the U.S. government has destroyed with invasions, sanctions, bombing, and covert and overt military operations would certainly disagree that the United States cared at all for their "human rights" and "freedom."

Build a United Movement in Solidarity with Venezuela

No lie from the mouth of anyone in the government of the U.S. or Canada and no amount of media disinformation can erase the simple fact the people of Venezuela have withstood a tremendous imperialist assault and continue to stand up for President Maduro and the Bolivarian revolutionary process.

This defeat, however, does not mean that the U.S. government and their allies, including the government of Canada, will stop their attempts to overthrow the government of



Transportation Mission workers march at a pro-government rally in Caracas, Venezuela. Their signs read "I am President," in solidarity with President Maduro and against the attempted coup. February 23, 2019.

President Maduro and reverse the gains made by poor, working and oppressed people in the last 20 years of the Bolivarian revolutionary process. Far from it.

As people living in the U.S. and Canada and around the world, it is our responsibility to stand against imperialist war and sanctions against Venezuela. We must build a stronger and more united movement to face this ongoing assault. We must continue to show the world that Venezuela is not alone.

Follow Alison on Twitter: @Alisoncolette

Battle of Ideas Press

Revolution & Counter Revolution in Venezuela



By Alison Bodine

Writer and researcher on Venezuela. She is a member of the Fire This Time Newspaper Editorial Board and is the coordinator of the Fire This Time Venezuela Solidarity Campaign. Alison Bodine is an electrical designer based in Vancouver, Canada.

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4 Years of Chaos, Destruction & Resistance The U.S-Backed Saudi War on Yemen

By Azza Rojbi

As families in Canada ready themselves to welcome the Spring, kids and families in Yemen continue to lose loved ones to the atrocities of the war on their countries. March 26, 2019, will mark four years since the start of the brutal bombing campaign and war on Yemen, led by Saudi Arabia and fully supported by the United States. The Saudi-led coalition started its war on Yemen under the guise of defending legitimacy and stability, and with the goal of reinstating to power the widely unpopular former president Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi, whose term had expired. He had resigned and flown to Saudi Arabia.

Today as we approach four years of war and bombing, there is no peace or stability in sight for the Yemeni people. Saudi and UAE fighter jets have indiscriminately bombed schools, homes, hospitals, universities, refugee camps, wedding halls, funerals, markets, cultural centres and countless other vital civilian targets. In addition to this inhuman bombing, the Saudi-led coalition has imposed on the Yemeni people an illegal land, air and sea blockade which severely hinders the country's access to much needed humanitarian aid.

Yemen today is the world's largest humanitarian crisis. According to the

Armed Conflict Location & Event Data project (ACLED), at least 60,223 people were killed in Yemen since January 2016. This drastic figure doesn't account for the deaths caused by malnutrition and disease as a direct consequence of the war. According to the United Nations, 24 million people in Yemen urgently need humanitarian aid, over 80% of the population.

These grim numbers paint a horrific picture of the reality of life for the Yemeni people after four years of war and aggression on their country by the Saudi-led coalition. Since day one of the war, the U.S. government offered full political, logistical and military support to Saudi Arabia and UAE, and continues selling them weapons and bombs. Several EU countries such as France and Britain, and also Canada, are complicit in this horrific war as they have been making billions selling weapons to Saudi Arabia.

The war on Yemen was created and planned by the U.S. and its imperialist allies and implemented by their puppets in the region, Saudi Arabia, UAE and their coalition. They are responsible for the bloodshed and humanitarian crisis in the country. To hear them claim today that they care about the well-being of the Yemeni people and are genuinely seeking a ceasefire in the country is an insult against human intelligence. You don't bring peace by continuously bombing an impoverished country for four years! Their war on Yemen is about expanding imperialist hegemony and control in the Middle East and shifting the balance of forces in Yemen in their interest.



Despite all criminal efforts by the U.S.-backed Saudi-led coalition and their imperialist allies such as France and Britain, they have failed in crushing the resistance of the dignified Yemeni people. In an article published by the magazine In These Times, Yemenis were asked to describe in one word or sentence their experience of the war. Alhassan Alhomani replied: "Yemen, despite the bombing, hunger, and death, will remain proud, refusing the humiliation and the breaking of this unjust world."

As peace loving people and anti-war activists around the world, we must stand with Alhassan and the brave Yemeni people in their resistance against the Saudi-led war on their country. We need to organize, to protest and hold our respective governments accountable for their support and participation in the atrocities committed in Yemen. We must continue to demand: that the Trudeau government cancels its \$15 billion arms deals with Saudi Arabia; the U.S., Canada, Saudi, France and Britain respect self-determination of Yemeni people; US/Saudi Arabia hands off Yemen. We must demand to stop the bombing and killing of children and innocent people in Yemen.

Follow Azza on Twitter: @Azza_R14



Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO)
Rally for Yemen, Vancouver, Canada

SOCIALIST CUBA DECIDES **CUBANS VOTE IN FULL FORCE** **TO APPROVE THE CONSTITUTION!**

By Tamara Hansen

On February 24, 2019, over 7.8 million Cubans voted in the country's constitutional referendum.

Of the Cubans who voted, 86.85% voted "YES" to the new constitution, with only 9% voting "No."

This was an important exercise in Cuba's popular democratic process and is a tremendous victory for Cuba's new constitution!



Cuban children monitor the ballot boxes on the day of the referendum

WHY A NEW CONSTITUTION?

Since the triumph of the Cuban revolution on January 1, 1959, Cuba has been working towards building a country and government which recognizes the rights of every human being to shelter, jobs, healthcare, education, human dignity, and equality. The revolutionary Cuban people and their revolutionary socialist government have worked to build a society which redistributes the nation's wealth into projects and programs which benefit everyone.

They have expropriated lands from large corporations and put it into the hands of farmers. They have transformed their health and education systems to make them

accessible for all no matter their wealth or whether they live in an urban or rural setting. They have invested in the community and human beings which are healthy, educated, cultured, and happy – rather than boosting the profits and wealth of individuals and corporations at the expense of working and oppressed people.

Cuba is different from other socialist projects which have come before or after it. It has not followed a cookbook recipe or copied another country's exact methods. This has meant developing a unique vision and transforming the legal and political system all the way to its foundation – the country's Constitution. First, in February 1959, they passed what Cuba called "the Foundational Law," until they were able to formally write and vote on a new Constitution on February 24, 1976. Over the last year, the people of Cuba have been discussing and debating their new Constitution, which was passed by referendum on February 24, 2019.

POPULAR PROCESS TO APPROVE CUBA'S NEW CONSTITUTION

Cuban journalist Vivian Bustamante Molina outlines the participative process undergone across the country in the lead up to the Constitutional Referendum, "The approval of the new Constitution was preceded by a three-month process of consultation with the people, in what has been described as a genuine expression of the democratic and participatory nature of Cuba's socialist system."

Bustamante Molina further explains, "The [New Constitution's] text was enriched with opinions expressed during 133,681 meetings held in neighbourhoods, workplaces, secondary schools, and universities. These proposals were all evaluated and led to changes in almost 60% of the proposed articles, including those regarding the country's political and economic foundations; rights and responsibilities; and the structure of the State, among other important issues."

Regarding the consultation process, Ulises Guilarte de Nacimiento, the Secretary General of the Cuban Workers' Federation (CTC), explained to Granma International News, "During the popular consultation process on the new Constitution, workers



made their contribution to ensure that the rights of the working class, indispensable in the economic and social life of the nation, are upheld." This process is one of the reasons so many Cubans participated in the vote, and why so many turned out for the "Yes."

WHAT'S NEW ABOUT THE NEW CONSTITUTION?

Overall the new Constitution includes firstly, some economic changes regarding private property and foreign investment while maintaining Cuba's commitment to a planned economy and socialism, as well as free universal healthcare and education systems. Secondly, some political changes regarding



Cubans voting in the Constitutional referendum

the structure of the national, provincial and municipal governments and term length for presidents, as well as the creation of the position of Prime Minister. Thirdly, the Constitution makes some legal and social changes: proposing to redefine marriage (no longer just between a man and a woman), the presumption of innocence within the legal system, and a ban on discrimination based on sexuality and gender identity.

These are all important discussions. At the same time, Cubans often joke that if you put three of them in a room, you will have five opinions! The dynamic debate over the new Constitution faced many challenges in trying to draft a final document that the vast majority could vote in favour of.

Throughout the three months of community meetings outlined by Bustamante Molina, many of the Constitution's articles were debated and contested. Some of the main

points raised are in a Spanish infographic we are reprinting from CubaDebate News in this article.

Here are three examples of articles that were often discussed in community meetings:

1) Article 121, on the election of the president by the National Assembly of people's power, 16,176 opinions were expressed, mostly asking for the president to be elected directly by voters.

2) More than 182,000 opinions were shared regarding the right to legal counsel. Making the right to a lawyer be explicitly from the moment of the arrest was the main proposal.

3) Article 68, on the theme of same-sex marriage and opening marriage to any couple no matter their gender, received 192,408 opinions, mostly asking to eliminate this article or to maintain the definition of marriage from the 1975 constitution as being between a man and a woman.

Unfortunately, the push to open the definition of marriage in Cuba was strongly opposed by many churches in Cuba and international religious institutions. They organized a campaign in Cuba and on social media against the rights of LGBTQ+ people to marry. This became one of the most contested articles in the new constitution and threatened to derail the referendum – turning it into a vote

for or against same-sex marriage, to the detriment of all other themes and issues.

While Cuba has made important strides in promoting lesbian, gay, bisexual, and trans rights, many anecdotal reports have suggested there was a very clear rural/urban divide on this question. The final version of the new Constitution which was voted on in the referendum removes any definition of marriage, thus opening the door to same-sex marriage in the future. The Constitution says the definition of marriage will be further discussed when Cuba sets out to update its Family Code in the next two years through a “popular consultation process” and “referendum.” Again, regardless of controversy, in the end, the mass discourse and consultations have the last word in Cuban popular socialist democracy.

Of course, it is very contentious to have a national referendum on what is a fundamental human right. For example, the right of black people to vote in the United States, or Indigenous people in Canada may not have passed if the governments had held referendums in the 1950s or 60s. The same goes for same-sex marriage when it was passed into law in Canada in 2005. Rights should not be granted or taken away based on what the majority of society thinks, they are rights and should be irrevocable. All human beings should be recognized equally by the laws governing their society.

At the same time, Cuba is in a difficult position. Cuba's revolutionary government seeks a sort of consensus in pushing forward its socialist project. It seeks the active participation of all people in politics and society. Pushing forward same-sex marriage without building wider understanding and support could be very dangerous. Especially as it opens space for U.S. imperialism to sow further division in society, which was seen over the summer in the messages being sent from anti-LGBTQ+ churches and religious groups in the U.S. aimed at Cuba.

In an article titled, “The reasons behind my vote” President of the Advisory Council of the Cuban Minister of Culture, Graziella Pogolotti takes aim at those who are against same-sex marriage in Cuba. She writes that

Artículos con mayor número de propuestas



ARTÍCULO 68. El matrimonio es la unión voluntariamente concertada entre dos personas con aptitud legal para ello, a fin de hacer vida en común. Descansa en la igualdad

192 408 propuestas

Destacan las referentes a mantener el artículo vigente o eliminar este artículo. **ARTÍCULO 121.** El Presidente de la República es elegido por la Asamblea Nacional del Poder Popular de entre sus diputados, por un periodo de cinco años, y le rinde cuenta a esta de su gestión.

16 176 propuestas

La mayor cantidad propone que el Presidente sea electo directamente por los votantes. **ARTÍCULO 165.** En cada provincia rige un Gobierno Provincial conformado por un Gobernador y un Consejo Provincial.

25 650 propuestas

Proponen que se cambie el nombre de Gobernador por Presidente. **ARTÍCULO 82.** Se reconoce el derecho de las personas a una vivienda digna.

15 398 propuestas

Proponen cambiar el término digno, y dudas acerca de qué se considera una vivienda digna.

El Presidente de la República puede ejercer su cargo hasta dos periodos consecutivos, luego de lo cual no puede desempeñarlo nuevamente.

88 039 propuestas

En general, dirigidas a no limitar los periodos de mandato.

ARTÍCULO 31. El trabajo es un valor primordial de nuestra sociedad. Constituye un deber, un derecho y un motivo de honor de todas las personas en condiciones de trabajar. Es, además, la fuente principal

51 414 propuestas

Se interesan en establecer el trabajo con carácter obligatorio.

ARTÍCULO 170. El Gobernador Provincial es designado, a propuesta del Presidente de la República, por la Asamblea Nacional del Poder Popular, o en su caso por el Consejo de Estado, por el término de cinco años.

16 188 propuestas

Exponen que el Gobernador sea electo directamente por el pueblo, por las asambleas municipales o por el Consejo Provincial.

Se exige además tener hasta sesenta años de edad para ser elegido en este cargo en un primer periodo.

24 035 propuestas

Lo que más se manifiesta es no precisar límite de edad.

ARTÍCULO 76. El trabajo se remunera en función de la cantidad, complejidad, calidad y resultados obtenidos, expresión del principio de distribución socialista “de cada cual según su capacidad, a cada cual según su trabajo”. Todas las personas reciben el mismo salario por trabajo de igual valor.

12 558 propuestas

Vinculadas a la correspondencia entre salario y precios, y dudas sobre cómo se va a garantizar el principio de distribución.

f) recibir asistencia jurídica para ejercer su defensa;

18 283 propuestas

Se solicita que las personas tengan derecho a asistencia jurídica desde el momento de la detención.



Title (in Spanish) reads “Articles with the highest number of proposals,” referring to sections in the new Constitution

Cuba's Constitution must, “condemn all forms of discrimination based on race, ethnic origin, social origin, gender, disability, and sexual orientation.” Pogolotti further explains why she will vote yes to the new constitution: “The concept of family is updated by recognizing its diversity of forms and manners of the constitution. It legitimizes an existing reality with longstanding roots, but hidden under the cloak of hypocrisy, a source of lacerating prejudices inherited from the darkest area of our cultural tradition.”

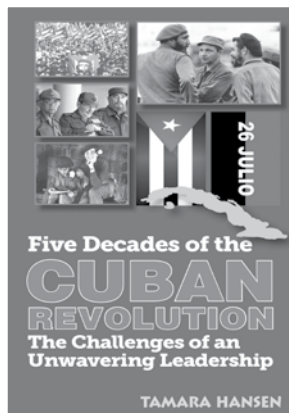
RESULT OF THE FEBRUARY 24 CONSTITUTIONAL REFERENDUM WAS A GREAT VICTORY

After the 133,681 community constitutions from August to November 2018 and changes to almost 60% of the articles in the first draft of the new Constitution, Cuba's National Assembly of People's Power discussed and then ratified the version of the new Constitution that would be voted on in the referendum. From December 22, 2018, to February 24, 2019, Cubans had the chance to read, analyze and discuss the final version that would be put to the vote.

On February 24, 2019, as he went to vote in the referendum, Cuban President Miguel Díaz Canal made some comments to reporters. Díaz Canal said, “I am convinced that the majority of Cubans will vote Yes for Cuba, for the Revolution and the future, because this Constitution dignifies and extols the values of the Cuban people, the legacy of Martí, of Fidel, of Raúl; it is a Constitution that extends the rights of all, that formulates a socialist state of law; it is an advanced, modern Constitution that will allow us to

Battle of Ideas Press

5 Decades of the Cuban Revolution The Challenges of an Unwavering Leadership



By Tamara Hansen

Coordinator of Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VWSC). She is also an editorial board member of The Fire This Time newspaper. She has travelled to Cuba over a dozen times and has written extensively on Cuban politics since 2003.

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Cubans count the results of the Referendum on the Constitution

untangle processes and move forward in a more determined manner.” Diaz Canal further stated, “The better world to which we all aspire is not with neoliberalism. It is with socialism, which we must continue to perfect, and seek a better economic response to problems, because, socially, it has already shown that it is more just.”

Indeed, as mentioned before, over 7.8 million Cubans showed up to cast a vote in the constitutional referendum.

Of the Cubans who voted, 86.85% voted “YES” to the Constitution, with only 9% voting “No.”

This is a tremendous victory for Cuba and the new Constitution!

For context, in the November 2016 American elections:

- 62,984,828 voters cast their ballots for future President Donald J. Trump
- This represented only 46.1% of voters who turned out to vote (nearly 136.8 million)
- This represents only 25.7% of the United States’ Voting Age Population (VAP) (245.5 million)

For further context, across Canada in the 2015 elections:

- 6,930,136 voters cast their ballots for future Primer Minister Justin Trudeau’s Liberal party
- This represented only 39.5% of voters who turned out to vote (just over 17.7 million)
- This represents only 24.3% of Canada’s Voting Age Population (VAP) (28.5 million)

We should add that in Cuba the Voting Age Population (VAP) is 9.1 million (with 8.7 million eligible voters). This means that in Cuba 74% of the Voting Age Population voted “YES” to the new Constitution. – Compare this with 25.7% of the United States’ VAP who voted for Trump or 24.3% of Canada’s VAP who voted for Trudeau

Voter turnout in Cuba for the referendum was also very high, 90.15%. In the 2016 Presidential election American voter turnout was 61.4%, and in 2015, Canada’s was 68.28%. In conclusion, we can say with

utmost certainty that the overwhelming majority of Cuban people have confidence in their popular democracy and electoral system, unlike the U.S. and Canada. No wonder Cuban socialism is such a frightening dilemma for the governments of the U.S. and Canada.

U.S. SECRETARY OF STATE ATTACKS THE RESULTS

Despite the clear statistics and the triumph of Cuba’s referendum U.S. Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, decided to make a statement slandering the decision of over 7.8 million Cubans.

Pompeo stated, “On February 24, the Cuban communist regime held what it called a “national referendum” on revisions to its constitution. No one should be fooled by this exercise, which achieves little beyond perpetuating the pretext for the regime’s one-party dictatorship. [...] The United States continues to stand with Cubans who have suffered for 60 years the revolution’s failed political system and economic mismanagement. We believe that history is on the side of the brave Cuban people and that this hemisphere is a region where democracy, freedom, and human dignity reign supreme.”

Remember this is the same U.S. government who is trying to install an unelected puppet regime in Venezuela, the same country whose President lost the popular vote, and had barely over 60% voter turn out. As Trump might say in a tweet, “SAD!”

In an interview with CubaDebate News, Dr. Martha Prieto, vice president of the Cuban Society of Constitutional Law and professor at the University of Havana, was asked: “what values would you say distinguish this Constitution?”

Dr. Martha Prieto responded, “They are essential: human dignity, which has been reinforced and radiates throughout the text, to rights and the whole legal system; equality, also more broadly, within the recognition of diversity; the protection of personal interests, with the demand for human solidarity as a means of ensuring a person’s existence, both individually and collectively, also expressed in the protection of rights for all and in the duty for each to contribute to the development and respect of the rights of others.”

While Cuba has been suffering for more than five decades from the U.S. unjust blockade and economy and society are also facing many challenges ahead, it is through discussion, debate, and unity that they will continue pushing forward the gains of the Cuban revolution and strengthening themselves for the tasks on the socialist road forward.

Follow Tamara on Twitter:@THans01

OUR HERITAGE



Vilma Espín Guillois
1930 - 2007

Cuban revolutionary leader and feminist. Founder and Eternal President of the Cuban Federation of Women.

“We had to change women’s mentality - accustomed as they were playing a secondary role in society. Our women had endured years of discrimination. We had to show women their own possibilities, their abilities to do all kinds of work. We had to make women feel the urgent needs of the revolution in the construction of a new life. We had to change both women’s image of themselves and society’s image of women...”

From the very beginning, we pursued a double goal:

To raise consciousness through political education, so that new tasks could be performed. To raise the political level through the tasks themselves.”

*Excerpt from a speech
November 1974*

Hey Trump! Lift the Blockade on Cuba Now! Return Guantanamo Immediately to Cuba!

By Janine Solanki

The United States, the third most populated country in the world with a population of over 325 million and the world's largest and most powerful military, is afraid of the island of Cuba with only 11.5 million people. The U.S. government puts its time and energy into a decades-old aggressive blockade to cripple the Cuban economy and make life difficult for the Cuban people – a blockade which also denies U.S. farmers of a nearby trading partner and prevents U.S. citizens from accessing Cuba's life-saving lung cancer vaccine. The U.S. government fearfully creates a media campaign aimed at painting Cuba in a negative light, full of fictitious fear-mongering media stories, most recently claiming that U.S. diplomats on the island have been victims of "sonic attacks." The U.S. government is even considering including Cuba on their list of "state sponsors of terrorism".

Why? Because more powerful than U.S. aggression is ideas, specifically those of the Cuban Socialist Revolution. Despite almost 60 years of the brutal U.S. blockade, the Cuban Revolution has provided free, and world-renowned healthcare and education to its people. Cuba has excelled in the fields of science, medicine, sports and

the arts. In a world facing an environmental crisis, Cuba has shown itself to be a global leader in showing the way forward, as the World Wildlife Fund named Cuba as the only country in the world to reach sustainable development. Just imagine how much more Cuba could achieve not only for its people but for the world, without this criminal and unjust blockade!

In Vancouver, Canada, Friends of Cuba Against the U.S. Blockade – Vancouver (FCAB-Van) is standing with the Cuban people against the U.S. blockade, and demanding that the U.S. return the illegally occupied territory of Guantanamo to Cuba. On February 15, 2019, Cuba supporters and solidarity activists came together for this monthly action in front of the U.S. Consulate in downtown Vancouver. Holding banners and picket signs high, and chanting "Lift the blockade on Cuba now!" protesters picketed in front of the U.S. Consulate, and gathered in between rounds of picketing to hear from speakers. Alongside local speakers, a message of solidarity from Ottawa Cuba Connections was also played for everyone to hear. In Vancouver, in Ottawa and Montreal, Canada, as well as Kiev, Ukraine, coordinated actions against the U.S. blockade on Cuba

are happening every month!

The Vancouver picket action wrapped up with a group photo, defiantly holding banners and picket signs up under the building sign of the U.S. Consulate. This photo was shared on social media for friends in Cuba and around the world to see that Vancouver is standing in the struggle to end the brutal U.S. blockade.

Vancouver activists, together with friends of Cuba in Ottawa and Montreal, Canada, and Kiev, Ukraine, will continue to unite in demanding an end to the unjust U.S. blockade against Cuba! To find out about the next action visit www.vancubavsblockade.org or follow on Facebook or Twitter @NoBloqueoVan.



February picket in front of US Consulate in Vancouver

VCSC Brings Cuban Culture to Vancouver!

By Janine Solanki

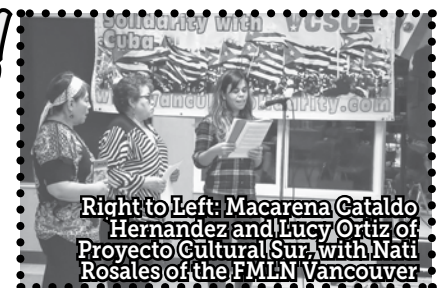
People may know Cuba for the Cuban revolution, for Fidel Castro and Che Guevara, or Cuba's renowned healthcare and education system. They may know of Cuba's famous beaches, rum and cigars. They may follow the Cuban ballet, take Cuban salsa lessons, or listen to Cuban music. Whether politics, science, medicine, tourism, sports or the arts, Cuba is a place everyone knows something about.

Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC) brings a bit of Cuba's warmth and flavour to Vancouver through Cuba film and cultural nights. February 15 was an opportunity to appreciate Cuba's musical history, while also raising funds for the Canadian Network on Cuba – Tornado Relief Campaign. On January 27, 2019, Havana, Cuba was hit by a deadly tornado with destructive winds of more than 300 km/hour. All donations collected at the February 15 VCSC Cuba Film and Cultural Night went towards the worthy cause of the Canadian Network on Cuba – Tornado Relief Campaign.

Participants started the evening enjoying Cuban expresso provided by Lorne from Skyline Expresso, with donations going to the fundraiser, and warmed up with delicious Cuban soup. Tamara Hansen, coordinator of Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba, welcomed everyone to the event and introduced poets Lucy Ortiz and Macarena Cataldo Hernandez from Proyecto Cultural Sur, who shared their beautiful poetry with the audience. Following the poets, Yasin Kiraga, President of the African Descent Society BC, spoke and gave greetings in recognition of African Heritage and Black History Month.

The program then turned to the feature film of the evening, "El Benny." This beautiful 2006 Cuban film tells the intriguing life story of Benny Moré, one of the greatest Cuban musicians of the 20th century. The film captivated the audience and gave everyone a greater insight into Cuba's musical richness.

If you have vacationed in Cuba and come back wanting to learn more, or if Cuba is too far of a trip to take, VCSC's Cuba film and cultural nights are opening the doors of Cuban film, culture and politics here in Vancouver. To find out about upcoming events about Cuba visit www.vancubasolidarity.com or follow VCSC on Facebook and Twitter @VanCuba_VCSC .



Right to Left: Macarena Cataldo Hernandez and Lucy Ortiz of Proyecto Cultural Sur, with Nati Rosales of the FMLN Vancouver

*WHY IS CBC LYING...



A Letter from the Cuban Ambassador to Canada Josefina Vidal

I reject categorically and in the strongest terms the tendentious and manipulative article "Canada at odds with Cuba 'ally' over Maduro's fate", written by journalist Evan Dyer and published today, Sunday, March 3, 2019, by CBC News.

Good journalism does not speculate, it informs objectively.

The assertion that thousands of Cubans would allegedly be inserted into the structures of the armed and security forces of Venezuela, holding the government of (legitimate) President Nicolás Maduro, is a scandalous slander. I

demand that CBC News present a proof, which evidently it does not have, since it does not appear in the whole article.

What Cuba has been offering Venezuela for many years is a modest cooperation, in which slightly more than 20,000 Cuban collaborators participate, 94% of them health workers, others in education, as they do in 83 countries around the world.

It is unfortunate that CBC News plays into the hands of the government of the United States, whose President happened to accuse Cuba a few days ago of maintaining a "private army" in Venezuela, a statement that is vile.

It is regrettable that CBC News does not denounce the US government's military aggression plans against the Bolivarian Republic

of Venezuela, and the fact that it openly declares that its ultimate objective is to overthrow the Cuban Revolution. What else to expect from a sinister character like John Bolton, who in 2002 organized the coup against Venezuela, while accusing Cuba of developing a biological weapons program at a time when the false pretext of the presence of WMD in Iraq

was fabricated to launch the war against that country? The latter lie was quickly denied by the US Intelligence Community itself.

Let's hope that CBC News, with its biased coverage, does not support the aggression of the United States against the peoples of our America, and then apologize, as

so many media organizations had to do after the war against Iraq. Our peoples will not forget.

As the Cuban Government recently stated, what is at stake today in Venezuela is "the sovereignty and dignity of Latin America and the Caribbean"..., "the survival of the rule of International Law and the UN Charter"... "and whether the legitimacy of a government emanates from the express and sovereign will of its people, or from the recognition of foreign powers". "History will severely judge a new imperialist military intervention in the region and the complicity of those who might irresponsibly support it".

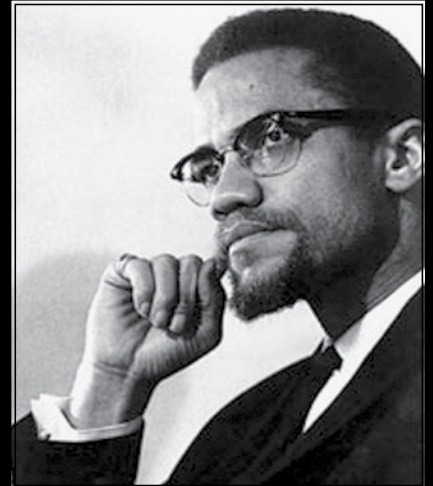
Josefina Vidal
Ambassador of Cuba to Canada

* Title by Fire This Time



Cuban Doctor in Venezuela

"By Any Means Necessary..."



MALCOLM X SPEAKS

Excerpt from Malcolm X Speech at Yale Law School., October 20, 1962

The white man in Great Britain could once boast that his control extended over so much of the black man's land that the sun never set on the British Empire. Today, when the sun rises, we can hardly find the British Empire.

How important is land? Well, look what happened to the British Empire when she lost the lands she had colonized in Asia: lands like India, China, Burma, Malaya, etc. Her inability to continue robbing Asia of the natural resources produced by the land almost wrecked the British economy, decreased her military strength and her political prestige so low she could no longer use "force" to hold her African colonies.

As her grip on the black man's land loosened, Britain dwindled. Loss of land meant loss of Empire, loss of wealth, power and prestige.

As the black men in Africa and Asia regain control over their lands, the French, Belgians, Dutch, Portuguese, Spanish, and all other European Empires also begin to crumble and topple downward.

As we face these facts, we are forced to agree that the economy of white Europe, the military power of white Europe, and the political prestige of white Europe was based upon the lands in Africa and Asia which they had taken from the black man.

By Janine Solanki

For the last 20 years, the Bolivarian Revolution has been changing Venezuela from a society built on the backs of poor people, to a society built by and for its people. Venezuela's mass supported Missions have provided the Venezuelan people with education, healthcare, subsidized food and even homes – currently, 2.5 million built on the road to 5 million with the Great Housing Mission. Perhaps even more important, the Bolivarian Revolution has empowered poor and working people in Venezuela to organize within their communities for the betterment of their lives and their country, with the support of the revolutionary government of Venezuela.

However, rather than respect Venezuela's sovereignty and self-determination, the government of the U.S. and their imperialist allies like Canada have instead been pushing their campaign of regime change in Venezuela. They are backing right-wing counter-revolutionary elements in Venezuela, imposing crippling sanctions and economic war against the people of Venezuela and most recently, backing an attempted coup against Venezuela's democratically elected President Nicolas Maduro.

February 8 Action

For almost four years, the Fire This Time (FTT) Venezuela Solidarity Campaign has been holding monthly protest actions in solidarity with Venezuela, alongside forums and other educational events. The latest of these monthly actions on February 8, 2019, was just a few weeks after the governments of the U.S. and Canada tried to install Juan Guaidó as the new "self-declared" interim President of Venezuela. Supporters of Venezuela's Bolivarian Revolution came together with renewed vigour to defend Venezuela against this recent undemocratic attack. Protesters held picket signs high and chanted "Hands Off Venezuela!" in front of the U.S. Consulate in downtown Vancouver, and in between rounds of picketing came together to hear from speakers over the loudspeaker.

With the escalation of U.S. aggression against Venezuela, it is even more critical for social justice organizations and peace-loving people locally and worldwide to unite together in defence of Venezuela. With this in mind, Fire This Time Venezuela Solidarity Campaign signed onto a statement against U.S. sanctions and meddling in Venezuela, initiated in the U.S. by Venezuela solidarity activists, and answered the call for coordinated actions on February 23. For more information on this initiative visit www.nowaronvenezuela.org

February 23 Action

As part of this international day of action,

IN VANCOUVER & AROUND THE WORLD – US/CANADA HANDS OFF VENEZUELA!



the Fire This Time Venezuela Solidarity Campaign held a rally and petition campaign in front of the Vancouver Art Gallery in downtown Vancouver. The action brought together people from many different backgrounds, grassroots groups, organizations and parties in defense of the people of Venezuela and the democratically elected President of Venezuela, Nicolas Maduro. Protesters chanted "No to Sanctions! No to War! US/Canada Hands Off Venezuela!" while people passing by stopped to talk with organizers and get more information, and to sign on to the "Canada Hands Off Venezuela" petition. As part of the rally program, protesters heard greetings direct from Venezuela, from Azza Rojbi and Mike Larson, two FTT Venezuela Solidarity Campaign organizers who were participating in the International Che Guevara Youth Brigade in Venezuela!

Earlier in the day, the Venezuela Solidarity Campaign also participated in another action in front of the CBC news building, organized by the newly formed Venezuela Peace and Solidarity Committee of Vancouver. All in all, on February 23 more than 150 cities around the world held demonstrations in solidarity with the people of Venezuela and the Bolivarian Revolution – beyond North America and throughout Latin America, Africa, the Middle East, Asia, Australia and across Europe!

Fire This Time Venezuela Solidarity Campaign is continuing not only its monthly actions but also educational events to counter the campaign of misinformation and fabrication against Venezuela that we see in our daily news. Fire This Time has also been sending its organizers on educational and solidarity trips to Venezuela. The coming months will include events as well as articles in Fire This Time newspaper where FTT organizers will share their experiences and eye-witness accounts from Venezuela. To find out more visit www.firethistime.net or follow us on Facebook and Twitter @FTT_np.

MOTHER OF ALL STRUGGLES

Indigenous struggle against colonialism



Howard Adams (Métis)
1921 - 2001

Revolutionary Métis Marxist scholar and professor Howard Adams grew up in a Métis community in Saskatchewan. He was a leader in the struggle for Indigenous rights, self-determination, and socialism.

Excerpt from Prison of Grass. Page 137

"Order becomes excessive when it is used only for preserving the status quo. Conformity becomes harmful when it prevents people from developing an inner essence and when it stultifies creative energy and action. The presence of excessive conformity, authoritarianism, indoctrination, and fear in the school environment negates the autonomy and the independence of a student. The final product of such schooling is a condition of thorough colonization.

For education to be truly liberating, however, it cannot take places with the present institutions and bureaucracy. Also, it will require more than placing native elites in the oppressor's position. The structure will have to be destroyed and new ones built that embody freedom and humanness as well as political power."

FROM YEMEN TO VENEZUELA STOP THE IMPERIALIST WAR DRIVE!



By
Janine Solanki

For nearly four years, the U.S.-backed, Saudi-led coalition has continuously bombed the people of Yemen. The indiscriminate Saudi bombing has targeted hospitals, homes, farms, schools, water infrastructure, markets, and a school bus. On January 28, 2019, Saudi bombs even targeted a camp for displaced persons, adding eight to the death count of over 60,000 people. In addition to the bombs, Saudi Arabia has imposed an air, sea and land blockade on Yemen preventing desperately needed food, fuel and medicines from reaching the Yemeni people. The United Nations has declared Yemen the "world's worst humanitarian crisis" as over 20 million Yemeni people, or two-thirds of the population, face severe food insecurity.

Throughout this bloody war, the U.S. government has quietly supported the Saudi-led war, providing logistical and intelligence support. In 2017 U.S. President Trump signed a deal for \$110 billion in arms sales to Saudi Arabia. The government of Canada has also continued its arms sales to Saudi Arabia, including a \$15 billion deal for vehicles armed with heavy guns and cannon.

On February 5, 2019, Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO) held a protest action in front of the U.S. Consulate in downtown Vancouver, demanding "U.S./Saudi Arabia Hands Off Yemen!" Protesters raised picket signs and chanted while picketing in front of the U.S. Consulate.

In between rounds of picketing, protesters gathered together and heard speakers call for an end to the brutal Saudi-led war on Yemen and condemned the governments of the U.S. and Canada for their support of the war. The action wrapped up with a group photo of protesters holding picket signs and banners against the war in Yemen, under the building sign for the U.S. Consulate. This photo was shared on social media worldwide, and photos and videos of the action were shared with Yemeni media.

The action also called attention to the recent attempted coup in Venezuela. Just two weeks earlier, the government of the U.S. and Canada tried to install Juan Guaidó as the new self-declared "interim President" of Venezuela. The U.S. has led an economic war and crippling sanctions against Venezuela for two decades, as well as a demonization campaign against the democratically elected President Nicolás Maduro since 2013. This failed coup is a dangerous step in the imperialist campaign against Venezuela, and activists at the MAWO action on February 5th took the opportunity of being in front of the U.S. Consulate to demand, "Hands Off Venezuela!"

Mobilization Against War and Occupation will continue educating, organizing and mobilizing against war and imperialist aggression, from Yemen to Venezuela! To find out about upcoming events and actions visit www.mawovancouver.org, or follow on Facebook and Twitter @MAWOVan

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Celebrate International Women's Day 2019

CELEBRATING THE REVOLUTIONARY

WOMEN

OF & CUBA, VENEZUELA
& THE WORLD!

MUSIC
SPEAKERS
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TRIVIA



FRIDAY MARCH 8 - 7:00 PM

Britannia Community Centre

"Canucks Family Education Centre"

1655 William St, Vancouver, Canada

@VanCuba_VCSC 778-382-5223

Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba

www.vancubasolidarity.com



LIFT THE U.S. BLOCKADE ON CUBA NOW!

► RETURN
GUANTANAMO
TO CUBA NOW!

MONTHLY PROTEST ACTION!

SUNDAY
MARCH 17 2019
4 PM

U.S. CONSULATE
1075 W. PENDER ST.
Vancouver, Canada



FRIENDS OF CUBA AGAINST THE U.S. BLOCKADE-VANCOUVER
NoBloqueoVancouver@gmail.com | @NOBLOQUEOVAN
WWW.VANCUBAVSBLOCKADE.ORG

NO TO SANCTIONS! NO TO WAR! U.S./CANADA HANDS OFF VENEZUELA!



TUESDAY MARCH 12
PROTEST ACTION

U.S./Canada: Hands Off Venezuela!
4 pm

U.S. Consulate in Vancouver
1075 West Pender Street
Downtown Vancouver

INFO TABLE & PETITION

- > No U.S./Canada Sanctions & Threats!
- > Respect the Self-Determination of the Venezuelan People!

5:30 pm

Vancouver Art Gallery
Robson street at Howe street
Downtown Vancouver

FIRE THIS TIME VENEZUELA SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN
WWW.FIRETHISTIME.NET @FTT_NP

Monthly Anti-War Rally & Petition Drive

NO WAR ON VENEZUELA!



FRIDAY
MARCH 15

5 PM 2019

Vancouver Art Gallery
(Robson @ Hornby)
Vancouver, Canada

U.S./Canada/NATO Hands Off Syria, Yemen, Venezuela, Iraq,
Iran, Afghanistan & North Korea!

Self-Determination for All Oppressed Nations!

Money for Healthcare, Housing &
Education - Not for War & Occupation!



Mobilization Against War & Occupation (MAWO)

WWW.MAWOVANCOUVER.ORG



@MAWOVAN